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A ROMAN ROAD.

STILL and soft with the mild radiance of early spring the afternoon sunshine sleeps upon the rich country, moor and woodland and meadow, that stretches away southward towards the Border. The top of a ruined tower far off rises grey amid the shadowy woods, and a river, like a shining serpent, gleams in blue windings through the russet valley-land, while the smoke of an ancient Border town hangs in the distance, like an amber haze, above the side of its narrow strath. Northward, too, league upon league, sweep the rich pasture-lands of another river valley. The red roofs of more than one peaceful hamlet glow warm there among the bowering road-avenues of ancient trees. And afar at the foot of the purple mountain to the west lies the grey sequestered abbey of the Bruce.

North and south upon that rich landscape history marks with a crimson stain the field of many a battle; and though peace and silence

sleep upon it to-day in the sunshine, hardly is there hamlet or meadow in sight whose name does not recall some struggle of bygone times. Across these hills a hundred and forty years ago Prince Charles Edward led the last raid of the clans, and before his time the battlefields of Douglas and Percy, of Cumberland and Liddesdale, carry the mind back into the mists of antiquity, out of which looms the sullen splendour of more classic arms.

Here, straight as a swan-flight along the ridge of the watershed, commanding the country for miles upon either side, still runs the ancient highway of Imperial Rome. From the golden milestone of Augustus in the Capitol, in a line scarce broken by the blue straits of the sea, ran hither the path of that ancient Power. Of old, along these far-stretching arteries came pulsing in tidal waves the iron blood of the stern heart beating far away in the south. From the wooded valleys below, the awed inhabitants doubtless long ago looked up and wondered, as the dark masses of the legions came rolling along these hills.

Tide after tide, like the rising sea, they rolled to break upon the Grampian barriers of the North. Here rode Agricola, his face set towards

the dark and mist-wrapt mountains beyond the Forth, eager to add by their conquest the word "Britannicus" to his name. Here by his side, it is probable, rode the courtly Tacitus, his son-in-law, to describe to future ages the Scotland of that time, "lashed," as he knew it, "by the billows of a prodigious sea." Southward here, stern and intent, once sped the swift couriers bearing to Rome tidings of that great battle at Mons Grampus, where the bodies of ten thousand Caledonians slain barred the northward march of the Roman general. Southward, again, along this road it is almost certain has passed the majesty of a Roman Emperor himself. For in the year 211 the Emperor Severus, ill and angry, leaving fifty thousand dead among the unsubdued mountains of the North, was borne out of Scotland by the remnant of his army, to die of chagrin at York. And here, long ago, by his flickering watch-fire at night, the Roman sentinel, perhaps, has let his thoughts wander again sadly to his home by the yellow Tiber two thousand miles away, to the vine-clad cot where the dark-eyed sister of his boyhood, the little Livia or Tessa, would be ripening now like the olives, with no one to care for and protect her.

Fifteen hundred years ago, however, the last yellow-haired captives had been carried south to whet the wonder of the populace in the triumph of a Roman general. Fifteen hundred years ago the power of the Imperial city had begun to wane, and the tide of her conquest ebbed along these hills. The eagles of the empire swept southward to defend their own eyrie upon the Palatine, and here, along the highways they had made, died the tramp of the departing legions. The tides of later wars, it is true, have flowed and ebbed across the Border. Saxon and Norman, both in turn, have set their faces towards the North. But later nations kept lower paths, and, untrodden here along the hill-tops, like the great Roman Empire itself, this chariot-way of the Cæsars has looked down upon them all. Forsaken, indeed, and altogether lonely it is now. Torn by the rains of fifteen centuries, and overgrown with the tangle of a thousand years, the roadway that rang to the hoofs of Agricola is haunted to-day by the timid hare, while overhead, where the sun glittered once on the golden eagles of the legions, grey wood-doves flutter now among the trees. But, strongly marked by its moss-grown ramparts, it still bears witness to the

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might of its makers, and, affording no text for the sad *Sic transit gloria mundi*, it remains a Roman defiance to time, like the defiance of all true greatness—*Non omnis moriar.*

Greater benefits than these roads of stone did the Roman bring to the lands he conquered. The tread of the victorious legions it was that broke the dark slumber of Europe, and in the onward march of the western nations the footsteps of the Cæsars echo yet upon the earth. Rome, it is true, ploughed her empire with the sword, but in the furrows she sowed the seeds of her own greatness; and these seeds since then have grown to many a stately tree. Fallen, it may be, is the splendour of the "city upon seven hills"; but east and north and west of her rise the younger empires of her sons. Augustus from his gilded Capitol no longer rules the world, and the gleam of the steel-clad legions no longer flashes along these old forsaken highways among the hills; but the earth is listening yet, spell-bound, to the strains of the Latin lyre, and wherever to this hour there is eloquence in the west, there flourishes the living glory of the Roman tongue.

To-day, with the coming of spring in the air,

there are symbols enough on every hand of the great Past that is *not* dead. The bole of the giant beech-tree here, it is true, has itself long since ceased to put forth leaves; but, springing upward from its strength, a hundred branches are spreading aloft the promise of the budding year. The dry brown spires of foxglove that stand six feet high in the coppice near, dropped months ago their purple splendours; but thick already about their roots the green tufts of their seedlings are pushing up through rich mould and warm leaf-drifts of bygone autumn to fill the place anon with tenfold glory. From the gnarled roots of the ancient thorn-hedge hangs many a yellow tress of withered fern; yet the life of the fallen fronds is, even now, stirring underground, and from the brown knobs there before long will rise the greenery of another year. Already, here and there, in sunny nooks, a spray of the prickly whin has burst into blossom of bright gold. A little longer, and the mossy crannies of the ruined dyke will be purple with the dim wood-violet. And soon, in the steep corner of the immemorial pasture that runs up there under the edge of the wood, the deep sward will be tufted with creamy clusters of the pale primrose.

A pleasant spot it is to linger in, even on this early spring day, for the sunshine falls warm in the mossy hollow of the road, and rampart and thicket overhead are a shelter from the wind. Resting on the dry branch of a fallen pine, one can gaze away southward over the landscape that the Romans saw; and, fingering through a pocket volume of some old Augustan singer, it is possible to realise something of the iron thought that stirred them to become masters of the world.

THE BLACK DOUGLAS.

UNDER the great eastern oriel at Melrose, where the high altar of the abbey once stood, lies buried the heart of King Robert the Bruce. Elsewhere, far off at Dunfermline, in Fife, the body of the Scots King was entombed. Some seventy years ago, when workmen in that ancient Scottish capital were repairing the ruined church, they came upon a marble monument, broken and defaced. Digging below, amid the mould of the sepulchre, they found the skeleton of a tall man. Fragments of cloth-of-gold lay about it, and the breast-bone had been sawn through; and by these signs the workmen knew that they had found the resting-place of the King. There, as one who was present has said, after the silence and darkness of five centuries, was seen the head that had planned and changed the destinies of Scotland; there lay the dry bone of the arm that on the eve of Bannockburn had at one blow slain the fierce De Bohun.

But the Bruce's heart, embalmed and cased in silver, bearing its own strange romantic story, lies apart in the Border Abbey. Around the place of its rest, in that fallen and mouldering fane, lie the race that took from the heart their armorial cognisance—the lords of the great house of Douglas.

Hot and stirring was the Douglas blood, and hardly a battlefield of the Middle Ages in Scotland but was stained with some of its best. Derived far back amid the mists of antiquity, none could tell how the race arose, and it was wont to be a boast with the house that none could point to its "first mean man." There is a tower in Yarrow by the Douglas (*dhu glas*, black water) Burn which is said to have been the stronghold of "the Good Lord James"; and amid the fastnesses of Cairntable in Lanark there is another Douglas Water and Douglas Castle. From one of these, no doubt, in ancient Scots fashion, the family took its name; but when that happened, and what the story was of its early days, must remain a tale untold. The house's mediæval greatness began, however, with the rise of Robert the Bruce, and from that time onwards its deeds mark with stain or

blazon every page of Scottish history. Lords of the broad Scottish Border, east and west, their hands were sometimes stronger than the King's. At one time a Douglas could ride to the field with twenty thousand spears at his back, and the gallop of the Douglas steeds sometimes was terrible alike on the causeway of Edinburgh and on the moorland marches of Northumberland. Douglas Earls and Knights fought as leaders through all the wars of David Bruce. A dead Douglas in 1388 won the famous fight with Hotspur on the moonlit field of Otterbourne. At Shrewsbury, in the days of Robert III., Henry IV. of England himself ran close to being hewn in pieces by the Earl of Douglas; and for gallantry on the battlefields of France this same great Earl was invested by the French King with the Dukedom of Touraine. The fame of Scottish chivalry for three hundred years was blown abroad under the Douglas name; for courtesies and blows alike were exchanged by the race on many battlefields besides those of the northern Borderland. Not that dark deeds are lacking in their history. Dark deeds belonged to their times. But in the tilting-yard or on the tented field were to be met no fairer foes. Nor

was their heroism all of the sword-and-buckler order, or confined to one sex. The finest thing recorded of the race, after all, was done by a woman. On that dark February night in 1437, when James I. was murdered in the Blackfriars Abbey at Perth, when the noise and clashing was heard as of men in armour, and the torches of the coming assassins in the garden below cast up great flashes of light against the windows of the King's chamber, was it not a Catherine Douglas who, for lack of a bolt, thrust her own fair arm into the staples of the door?

The fortunes of the family culminated in the reign of James II. Whatever its origin had been, in that reign the race had attained an eminence more dazzling, perhaps, than that of any subject before or since. Earls of Douglas and Wigton, Lords of Bothwell, Galloway, and Annandale, Dukes of Touraine, Lords of Longueville, and Marshals of France, they had intermarried more than once with the Scottish Royal House itself. Members of the family also held the Earldoms of Angus, Ormond, and Moray. What wonder that they lifted haughty heads, and began to look askance at the Royal power? Then it was that the Stuart King stooped to

treachery, and then was done the darkest deed that ever sullied the Stuart name.

Already, in the boyhood of James, a youthful Earl of Douglas and his brother had been betrayed and slain by the King's Ministers. For this transaction, however, the King was in no way to blame. The young Earl was his guest in the Castle of Edinburgh, and when at the treacherous feast the black bull's head, the sign of death, was placed upon their table, James had wept piteously and begged hard for the lives of his friends. It was later, when another Earl was lord upon the Border, that the King made murder his resource. For this act, it must be said, James had strong provocation. Douglas had been honoured by him, had been made Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, and had abused that honour. He had flouted the King's authority, and slain the King's friends, and, having been commanded by letter to deliver up to James's representative the person of a subject unjustly imprisoned by him, he delivered him up "wanting the head." Finally, with two great Earls of the North, he had entered into an open league against the King. All this, however, cannot palliate the King's resource, cannot absolve

the tragic scene in that little supper-chamber in the Castle of Stirling. There the great Earl was under the protection of the King's hospitality, when James, bursting into rage at his taunts and at his refusal to abandon the treasonous compact, suddenly cried, "By Heaven, my Lord, if you will not break the league, this shall!" and, drawing his dagger, stabbed Douglas to the heart.

This deed brought the family fortunes to a climax, and for three years Scotland was blackened by the raging of the Douglas Wars. From Berwick to Inverness the country was wasted by the struggles of the partisans. Stirling and Elgin were burned, and, amid famine and pestilence, the troubles of the wars of Edward seemed come again on Scotland: so great had grown the power of these Border lords. At last, however, the King and the Earl came face to face. Each led an army of forty thousand men, and only the small river Carron ran between them. By the combat of the morrow, it seemed, would be known whether James Stuart or James Douglas should wear the Scottish crown. But the Earl's heart was seen to fail, and on the morrow, when he awoke, he found his camp

deserted. Of all his host of the previous day not a hundred followers remained. Nothing was left him but flight; and, turning his back, as a Douglas had never done before, he made his way to England. Twenty years later, having been captured by one of his own vassals in a petty skirmish on the Border, he was sent to end his days as a monk in the Fifeshire Abbey of Lindores.

Thus ended the great line of the Earls of Douglas, a race whose history for three hundred years had been the history of Scotland, and whose foot had twice, at least, been set upon the step even of the throne. From the house's latter days of turbulence and ambition there is pleasure in turning back to those earlier years when the Good Lord James rode at the Bruce's saddle-bow, and the patriotism of groaning Scotland rallied round the coupled names of Douglas and the King. No later deed can dim the lustre of those years, and nothing in history can outshine the last scene in the life of the Knight who strove to carry the Bruce's heart to the Holy Land. Himself hemmed round by the Moors on that Spanish plain, in his effort, it is said, to succour a friend, the Earl took from

his neck the casket containing the King's heart. "Pass first in fight," he cried, "as thou wert wont to do! Douglas will follow thee, or die!" Then, throwing the casket far among the enemy, he rushed forward to the place where it fell, and was there slain. Well would it have been for the race of Douglas had they ever remained true as that ancestor to the service of their King!

IN THE SHADOW OF ST GILES'.

NIGHT in Edinburgh! The traveller may have seen the sun set over the lagoons of Venice; he may have watched the moon rise behind the Acropolis of Athens; but he has seen nothing finer or more inspiring than is shown him by the sparkle of the frosty stars in this grey metropolis of Scotland. From the terraced pavement of Princes Street, that unmatched boulevard of the modern city, looking across the dark chasm where once surged the waters of the North Loch, he sees the form of the Old Town rise, from Holyrood Palace low in the eastern meadows to the castled rock high at the western end, a dark mass all against the southern sky. Yellow lines of light mark the modern bridges spanning the abyss below, and windows still glowing — dim loopholes in the perilously high old houses beyond—bespeak the inhabitants there not yet all asleep. But these are forgotten in the witchery of the sight, when

the clouds part, and the silvery starlight is shaken down upon the ancient city; when behind the broken sky-line of roofs and gables the clear moon comes up, and hangs, a lustrous jewel, among the pinnacles of St Giles'.

Nor is it only the magic of the sight that stirs strange pulses in the blood. Standing at night in the Roman Coliseum, it seems still possible to hear majestic echoes of an older world. But the Scotsman under the shadow of "high Dunedin" is moved, as nowhere else, by memories of old glory and old sorrow. Here to a Scottish heart the past comes back. Here sighed the fatal sweetness of Rizzio's lute. Here rang the wild clan-music of Lochiel. Among these old walls, however, something more is to be remembered than the deeds of high fame. Ever and again, it is true, amid the gloom of half-forgotten centuries, there is caught the glitter of some historic pageant. Out of the silence about the Cathedral one seems to catch the chime of fuming censers and the roll of coronation litanies, with, perchance, the sonorous accents of a Gavin Douglas, poet-bishop of Dunkeld; and one thrills again to hear the boom of the Castle cannon as the Fourth James rides gallantly away

to his death. But behind all this a more tender interest touches the heart. What of the real inner life of those centuries bygone—the loves and sorrows, burning once, and poignant as ours are to-day, which have passed out of sight among the years, and been forgotten? Of some of these, indeed, Sir Walter Scott has written the story on the dark curtain of the past with a pen of fire. But for countless others there is not even the poor consolation of a recorded name. Occasionally, however, amid the seething of history, or in some half-remembered old song, a reference occurs, and a glimpse all too brief is had into some tender and mournful story. And so one sees that, behind the glitter of a Stuart chivalry, of brave and splendid deeds before the world, sometimes there lay a shadow, the sigh of a breaking heart, the stain of unavailing tears.

Who knows the early history of that Lady of Loch Leven, mother of the Regent Murray? Grimly enough she is painted by Scott in her old age as the keeper of Queen Mary. Yet assuredly once she was lovely and young, and had strange beatings of heart as she listened to the whispers of her Royal lover, that all too gallant James V. What was their parting like,

when the parting came? Was there the last touch of regretful hands, a remorseful caress from the royal lips, a passionate farewell? Or was there only the cruel news by alien mouths that her place was filled by another, that she had been forsaken? No one can tell us now.

Then what of the Lady Anne Campbell of Argyle, at one time betrothed to Charles II.? The youthful Prince, aged twenty, had been crowned gorgeously, after the ancient manner of the Scottish Kings, at Scone. But King only in name, with England still under the iron rule of Cromwell, and only a faction in Scotland devoted to his cause, his immediate fortunes were entirely in the hands of the Scottish leader, the crafty, covenanting Marquis of Argyle. Reaching ever higher in ambition, and dazzled by the weird vision of the race of MacCallum More mounting the throne, Argyle proposed that Charles should marry his daughter. Needy and reckless, and eager to attach Argyle to the Royalist cause by the golden bands of hope, the King pretended consent. Alas for the Lady Anne! What maiden could keep still her heart when wooed by so royal a lover? For wooing there must have been, to keep up the pretence of betrothal, and

how was the maiden to know that those words and looks, and, it may have been, those warmer caresses, were all no more than a diplomacy? And when the crash came, with Cromwell's defeat of the covenanting army at Dunbar, and the revelation that she had given up her all and had been deceived—how bitter, how cruel the discovery! The contemporary Kirkton relates circumstantially that "so grievous was the disappointment to the young lady, that of a gallant young gentlewoman, she lost her spirit, and turned absolutely distracted."

Then there is a pitiful little song, unprinted and all but forgotten,* sung to a quavering, pathetic old tune, and relating in quaint ballad fashion something of the story of one Jeanie Cameron, an adherent of Prince Charles Edward in the rebellion of 1745. It narrates how the maiden, having fallen sick, not without a suspicion of its being heart-sickness, and all cures of the leeches failing, was prescribed "ae bricht blink o' the Young Pretender." So she sate her down and wrote the Prince "a very long letter, stating who were his friends and who were his

* It has now been included in "Ancient Scots Ballads with their Traditional Airs." Glasgow: Bayley & Ferguson, 1894.

foes." This letter she had closed, and was just "sealing with a ring," when, as used to happen in ballad story, "ope flew the door, and in came her King." Poor young lady!—

> She prayed to the saints and angels to defend her,
> And sank i' the arms o' the Young Pretender.
> Rare, oh, rare! bonnie Jeanie Cameron!

Nor is this pretty romance merely an invention of the poet's brain. One of the family by whom the song has been preserved happened, it seems, in the latter part of last century, to be buying snuff in a shop in Edinburgh, when a beggar came in. Nothing was said before the stranger; but the shopkeeper, as if it were an accustomed dole, handed the beggar a groat. Afterwards, in reply to a remark of his customer as to the delicacy of the beggar's hand which had received the coin, the shopkeeper revealed the fact that the recipient of his charity was no man, but a woman, and no other than Jeanie Cameron, a follower of the Chevalier. Her story, so far as he knew it, was sad enough. She had followed the Prince to France, hoping, no doubt, poor thing! to resume there something of the place she had believed herself to hold in his affections. Alas! it was only to find herself, like so many

others, forgotten, cast off, an encumbrance to a broken man. And then, with who can tell how heavy a heart, she made her way home, only to discover that her family had shut their door upon her, and cut her adrift. So, for these many years, she had wandered about forlorn and lonely, supported by a few charitable bourgeois in the streets of Edinburgh—she who could look back upon the day when she had loved and been loved by a Stuart Prince.*

Such are some of the stories which find no place in history, but whose consciousness sheds a tragic and tender interest about this grey old capital of the North. Who will say that they are not as well worth thought as the trumpetings of herald pursuivants and the clash of warlike arms?

* This account of the latter days of "Mrs Jean Cameron" finds corroboration in a footnote to the second volume of Chambers's "Traditions of Edinburgh."

A WEAVING VILLAGE.

OUT of the way, in this quiet hollow of the Ayrshire hills, something remains yet of the life of a hundred years ago. Elsewhere the puffing of steam may have taken the place of toil by hand, but here in the long summer days, from morning till night, the click-clack of the looms is still to be heard, and within every second window up the length of the village street, the dusty frames are to be seen moving regularly to and fro. Pots of geranium and fuchsia are set sometimes in these windows, and through the narrow doorways the cottage gardens can be seen behind, carefully kept, and ablaze just now with wallflower borders and pansies. Sadly, however, is the place decayed from its prosperity of old. Little traffic comes now to the wide, empty street. The carrier's waggon is an object of interest when it puts in an appearance. The baker's van may be the only vehicle of an afternoon; and twice a week only comes the flesher's cart. Butcher

meat, it is to be feared, is but seldom seen on some of the village tables; and, when work is more than usually scarce, many must put up with but "muslin-broth." Here and there a roofless ruin, breaking the regular line of dwellings, tells of a decaying industry. In the sunny inn-door at the head of the village the brown retriever may rouse himself, once in the afternoon, to inspect the credentials of some vagrant terrier; and, but for the faint click-clack of the looms all day, and the appearance, once in a while, of a woman with a pair of stoups to draw water at the village well, the place might seem asleep.

Yet a hearty trade once throve on the spot. Every house had its loom going, sometimes two; and there was always work in plenty. Weavers' wives could go to kirk then in black-beaded bonnets and flowered Paisley shawls, and the Relief Kirk minister got his stipend of eighty pounds a year nearly always paid. In those times the carrier's cart used to have business in the village every day; merchants from Glasgow came bidding against each other for work in a hurry; and four of the weavers at once have been known to have sons at college studying for the ministry. Those were the days when the

village kept a watchful eye upon the religious and political movements of the country. Before the Stamp Duty was removed from newspapers, the weavers subscribed in clubs and took out their weekly sheet, which was passed from shop to shop, read and digested, and thoroughly threshed out in the door-step debates, when a knot of neighbours would gather between the spells of work. In this way the great Reform Bill was fully discussed and settled here long before it passed the House of Commons; and the absorbing question of the Disruption, which gave birth to the Free Church, was thoroughly argued and thought out on its merits.

True to the traditions of their craft, of course, most of the weavers were the reddest of Radicals, and the progress of the Chartist movement excited the keenest interest among them. The work at the looms was to a great extent mechanical, and while they pushed the treadles and pulled the shuttles to and fro, the weavers had time to think; and shrewd thinkers and able debaters many of them became, ready at the hustings with questions on the Corn Laws, the freeing of the slaves, and the Irish grievances, which were apt to put a political candidate to some trouble.

He had not their advantage of the daily "argufying" and the Saturday night debates at the village inn. There was a tradition that in the room where this club met, the poet Burns had once spent an evening, and the fact lent an additional zest to his song, which they never tired of quoting,—"A man's a man for a' that."

> A king can mak' a belted knight,
> A marquis, duke, and a' that;
> But an honest man's aboon his might,
> Guid faith he maunna fa' that.

The industry of the village has died hard. Amid decaying trade the weavers kept to their looms, and many a pinch was suffered before one after another laid down his shuttle. Their feelings are not difficult to understand. As boys they had played about the village well. As young men they had wandered with their sweethearts—that delicious time—down the woodland roads around. Memories had grown about them and their old homes during the long years of work. In the kirkyard not far off lay the ashes of mother or wife or child. But the merchants had ceased to come to the village, and it was a weary walk for the poor weavers to carry their webs all the way to Glasgow, to hawk them

from warehouse to warehouse, and sometimes to have the choice at last of accepting a ruinous price for them, or of taking them home again.

It was after a bootless errand of this sort that old John Gilmour was returning to the village one night in late October some forty-three years back. Honest soul, through all his straits he had never owed a neighbour a penny. That night, however, his affairs had come to a critical pass, and the morrow held a black look-out for him. His web was still on his back, not an offer having been got for it in town, though he knew the workmanship to be his best. Upon its sale he had depended to pay for the winter's coals, and the necessaries of the morrow; for on the day previous the last of his carefully guarded savings had been spent. Moreover, his wife and he were growing old, and could hardly look forward to increased energy for work. And he was bringing home bad news. Their second son (the eldest had run away to sea eleven years before) had broken down in his attempt to teach, and, at the same time, push his way through the Divinity Hall, and had been ordered by the doctor to stop work for the winter altogether. How was the old man to break all this disastrous

news to his wife? The web was heavy, but his heart was heavier.

He had reached the fork of the road close by the old disused graveyard of the parish, and was thinking a little bitterly of the reward that remained to him from his long life of hard work, and of how quiet and far from care those were who lay on the other side of the low dyke under the green sod, when a hackney carriage came up behind, and the driver stopped to ask the way to ——.

"Keep the left road," said the old man, and was resuming his walk, when a bearded face appeared at the carriage window.

"That seems a heavy bundle you are carrying. Are you going my way?"

Once inside, the old weaver found his companion looking at him intently.

"You have had a long walk this day, surely? Have you no son to carry so heavy a load for you?"

Ay, he had two sons, Gilmour said: but one was lost at sea, and the other was struggling at college.

"You live alone, then?" asked the questioner, tremulously.

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No, thank God! he had a kind wife at home, who had been his consolation through many a dark hour.

"Thank God!" echoed the younger man.

The carriage rolled on and entered the village. The weaver pointed to his house, and they stopped there. The stranger helped him out with his web, and entered the house with him.

"It's just the web back, guidwife," he said. "But dinna look sae queer like. I'se warrant I'll sell it the morn. An' here's a gentleman has helpit me on the road. Hae ye onything i' the hoose to offer him?"

But the wife was not thinking of the web or the distress of the morrow. Her eyes were on the stranger, and the corners of her lips were twitching curiously. He had not spoken, but as he removed his hat she sprang towards him.

"It's Willie!" she cried; "it's Willie!" And her arms were about his neck, and, half laughing and half crying, she buried her face on his breast.

It was Willie. He was the first who came back to the village from the gold-fields of Ballarat.

WHERE THE CLANS FELL.

WHAT richer picture could the eye desire than this sunlit glory of harvest colour amid the Highland mountains? The narrow sea-loch itself below gleams blue as melted sapphire under the radiant and stainless sky; around it, on the rising slopes, the corn-fields, rough with fruitful stooks, spread their yellow ripeness in the sun; amid them shine patches of fresh soft green where the second clover has been cut; while above hang the sheltering woods, like dark brown shadows; and, over all, the surrounding hills, bloom-spread as for a banquet of the gods, raise their purple stain against the blue. Only far off, above the dim mountains of amethyst in the North, lies a white argosy of clouds, like some convoy of home-bound India-men becalmed on a summer sea.

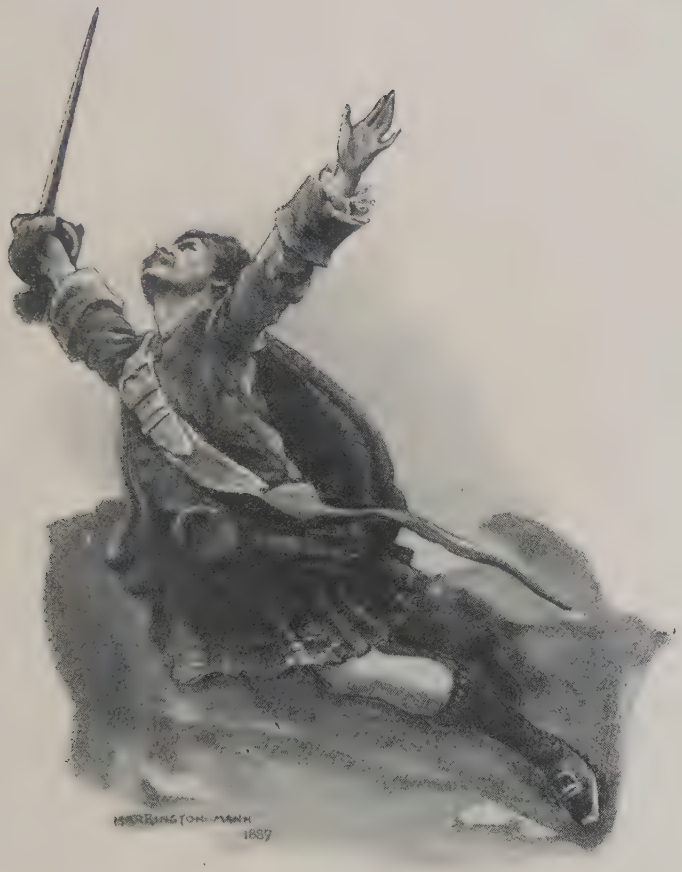
There has been no sound for an hour but the whisper of the warm autumn wind that the farmer loves for winnowing his grain, the drone of a

velvety bee sometimes in the blue depth of a hare-bell, and the crackle of the black broom-pods bursting in the heat. The furry brown rabbits that pop prudently out of sight in the mossy bank are silent as shadows; the red squirrel that runs along the dyke top and disappears up a tree makes no chatter; and even the shy speckled mavis that bobs bright-eyed across the path is voiceless, for among the birds this is the silent month.

Less and less, as the narrow road rises through the fir woods, grows the bit of blue loch seen far behind under the branches, and the little clachan in the warm hollow over the brow of the hill is shut from the world on every side by the deep and silent forests of fragrant pine. Wayside flowers are seeding on the time-darkened thatch of these sequestered dwellings. There, with branches of narrow pods, the wallflower clings; and the spikes of the field-mustard ripen beside the golden bullets of the ox-eyed daisy. On a chair at the door of one of the cottages an ancient granny is sunning herself, counting with feeble fingers the stitches on her glancing knitting wires. A frail old body she is, set here, neat and comfortable, by some loving hand, to

enjoy, it may be, the sunshine of her last autumn on earth. Withered and wrinkled are her old cheeks with the cares of many a winter, and it seems difficult to recall the day when she was a ripe-lipped, merry reaper in the corn-fields; but under her clean, white mutch the grey old eyes are undimmed yet as they watch, heedful and lovingly, the movements of the little maid tottering about her knee. Where are her thoughts as she sits there alone, hour after hour, in the silent sunshine? Is she back in the dusk among the sweet-scented hay-ricks, listening with fluttering heart to the whispers of her rustic lover? Is it a sunny doorway where she sits crooning for happiness over the baby on her knee? the little one that is all her own—and his. Or is it a winter night as she kneels in the flickering light by the bedside, feeling the rough, loving hand relax its grasp, while she sees the shadow pass across the wistful face, and knows with breaking heart that she is alone? These are the peaceful scenes of peasant life; alas, that they should ever be darkened by the shadow of the sword!

Granny can speak no English, or she might have something to say of the great disaster that befell the clans on the moor close by in her



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father's time. For not far beyond the little clachan the road emerges on the open heath, and there, where the paths cross, lies the great, grey boulder on which the terrible duke stood to survey the field just before the battle. Not even then was he aware how nearly his birthday carousals of the night before, at Nairn, had been surprised and turned into another slaughter of Prestonpans. So perilously sometimes does the sword of Damocles tremble over an unconscious head. His troops, well rested and provisioned, were fresh as that April morning itself, while the poor clansmen in the boggy hollow to the right, divided in their councils, and famishing for treacherous lack of bread, were exhausted by the fruitless twenty-four mile surprise march of the night. Yet they came on, these clansmen, half an hour later, like lions; plunging through the bog, sword in hand, in the face of the regulars' terrific blaze of musketry, cutting Cumberland's first line to pieces, and rushing on the second line to be blown to atoms at sword's length.

The yellow corn is being shorn to-day where the clans were mowed down then. Here was spilt the best blood of the Highlands. Close by, the brave Keppoch, crying out as he charged alone

before the eyes of his immovable Macdonalds that the children of his tribe had forsaken him, threw his sword in the air as a bullet went into his heart. Wounded, at the tall tree to the west fell Cameron of Lochiel; and in the little valley beyond, the defeated Prince Charles, as he fled, paused a moment to bid his army a bitter farewell. The road here at the corn-field's edge dips a little yet, where the fatal bog once lay, and ten yards to the left still springs the Dead Men's Well, to which so many poor fellows crawled during the awful succeeding night to allay the tortures of their thirst before they died. Here the gigantic MacGillivray, leader that day of the clan M'Intosh, fell dead as, with his last strength, he bore to the spring a little wounded boy whom he had heard at his side moaning for water.

A better fate the bravery of these men deserved, misguided though they might be; for the victors gave no quarter to wounded or prisoners, and the soul shudders yet at thought of the horrors that followed the battle. It was not enough that disabled men should be clubbed and shot, and barns full of them burned to ashes; but to this day in many a quiet glen lie the remains of hamlets

ruined in cold blood, and tales are told of the dark vengeance taken by the victorious soldiery upon defenceless women, little children, and old men. Well was it, perhaps, for those who had fallen that they lay here at rest under the heather—they could not know the cruel fate of wife or child. To other lips was left the wail for "Drummossie; oh, Drummossie!" At rest they were, these hot and valiant hearts, plaided and plumed as warriors wish to lie, in their long bivouac under the open heaven. Not the first nor the last of their race, either, were they to fall, scarred with the wounds of war; for, less than a mile away, under the lichened cairns of Clava, do not the ashes rest of the chiefs their ancestors, slain in some long-forgotten battle of the past, and waiting, like these, for the sound of the last *réveille?*

Here, on each side of the road, can still be made out the trenches where the dead were buried, according to their tartans it is said; and, while the rest of the moor is purple with heather, these sunken places alone are green. On the edge of the corn-field rises a stone, inscribed "Field of the English; they were buried here"; and at the end of each trench on the moor stands

a rude slab bearing the name of its tribe. A singular pathos attends two of these stones, on which is written, not M'Intosh or Stewart or Fraser, but "Mixed Clans."

Round the oval moorland of the battle rise thick fir-woods now, dark and mournful. Sometimes the winds of the equinox, as they roar through these, recall the deadly rolling musketry of long ago. But the air to day scarcely whispers in the tree-tops, and sunshine and silence sleep upon the resting-place of the gallant dead. Only some fair, white-clad girls, who have come up from Inverness to read the battle inscription on the great boulder-cairn, are plucking a spray of heather from the Camerons' grave.

TAM O' SHANTER'S RIDE.

NEVER is a man more conscious of his manhood than when, with bridle in hand and a good horse under him, he takes the road at a gallop. As his steed stretches out and the hoof-beats quicken, as the milestones fly past and the cool air rushes in his face, he casts care to the winds, his pulse beats stronger, he rejoices to breathe and to live. The pride and the pleasure of this experience have ever appealed to the poets, and the ringing of horse-hoofs echoes through the verse of all ages—in the warrior chants of Israel; through the sounding Virgilian lines; to the reverberating rhythm of the "Ride from Ghent to Aix." But the maddest, most riotous gallop of all is, perhaps, that of the grey mare Meg and her master from Ayr to the Shanter farm.

Burns was never more fortunate in his subject than when thus fulfilling his promise of providing a legend for "Alloway's auld haunted kirk." He did not, it is true, with the nice pre-

cision of the Augustan laureate, trim his verse to a mechanical imitation of sound; but the wild rush and deftness of the movement of the poem, the quick succession of humour on pathos, scene upon scene, the ludicrous, the startling, the horrible, carry away the breath, and suggest more vividly than any mere measuring rhythm the mad daring of that midnight ride.

There is a little, old-fashioned, deep-thatched inn still standing where the street leads southwards out of Ayr. Under its low, brown-raftered roof it is yet easy to imagine how the veritable hero, Tam, may have sat with his cronies "fast by the ingle, bleezing finely," while "the night drave on wi' sangs and clatter," and the storm outside hurled itself fruitlessly against the little deep-set window. It would need all the liquor he had imbibed to fortify the carouser for that fourteen-mile ride into Carrick. A midnight hurricane of rain and wind would be no pleasant encounter on that lonely road, to say nothing of the eerie spots to be passed, and at least one point more than a trifle dangerous. But Tam o' Shanter was a stout Ayrshire farmer, and, moreover, he was accustomed to face worse ragings than those of the elements; so it may

be supposed that, when he had hiccupped a last goodbye to his friends, and, leaving the warm lights of the inn streaming into the street behind him, galloped off into the blackness of the night, it was with no stronger regret than that he must go so soon. Half a mile to his right, as he bucketed southward along the narrow road, he could hear the ocean thundering its diapason on the broad beach of sand, and at the places where he crossed the open country its spray would strike his cheek and fly inland with the foam from Maggie's bit. Sometimes, when the way lay through belts of beech and oak woods, the branches would roar and shriek overhead as they strove with maniac arms against the tempest.

The old road to Maybole, and that which Tam o' Shanter took, ran a little nearer the sea than the one which did duty in Burns' time, and still serves its purpose; and about a mile out of Ayr it crosses the small stream at the ford where "in the snaw the chapman smoored." Here, on the newer road, a curious adventure is said to have befallen the poet's father. There was formerly no bridge across this stream; and the legend runs that William Burnes, a few hours before the birth of his son,

in riding to Ayr for an attendant, found the water much swollen, and was requested by an old woman on the farther side to carry her across. Notwithstanding his haste he did this; and a little later, on returning home with the attendant, he was surprised to find the woman seated by his own fireside. It is said that when the child was born it was placed in the gipsy's lap, and she, glancing into its palm, made a prophecy which the poet has turned in one of his verses:—

> He'll hae misfortunes great and sma',
> But aye a heart aboon them a';
> He'll be a credit till us a'—
> We'll a' be prood o' Robin.

If all gipsy predictions were as well fulfilled as this concerning the poet, the dark-skinned race assuredly would be far sought and courted.

A few strides beyond the stream his grey mare had to carry Tam past a dark, uncanny spot—"the cairn whare hunters fand the murdered bairn." It was covered then with trees, and one of them still stands marking the place. To the left of the old road here, and hard by the newer highway, lies the humble cottage, of one storey, where Robert Burns was born. It has been

considerably altered since then, having been used until recently as an alehouse, and further accommodation having been added at either end. But enough of the interior remains untouched to allow of its original aspect being realised. The house is the usual "but and ben," built of natural stones and clay, and neatly whitewashed and thatched. In the "but," the apartment to the left on entering from the road, there is little alteration; and it was here, in the recessed bed in the wall, that the poet first saw light. The plain deal dresser, with dish-rack above, remains the same, and the small, square, deep-set window still looks out behind, over the fields his father cultivated. An old mahogany press with drawers still stands next the bed; the floor is paved with irregular flags; and the open fireplace, with roomy, projecting chimney, occupies the gable. An extra door has been driven through the south-east corner to allow the profane crowd to pass through, and a larger window has been opened towards the road that they may see to scratch their names in the visitors' book; but the rest of the apartment, towards the back, is little changed, if at all, since the eventful night when "Januar' winds blew hansel in on Robin."

The hour of his ride was too dark, however, for the galloping farmer to see so far over the fields. A weirder sight was in store for him.

A few hundred yards farther on, when, by a well which is still flowing, he had passed the thorn, now vanished, where "Mungo's mither hanged hersel," just as the road plunged down along the woody banks of Doon, there, a little to his left,

> glimmering through the groaning trees
> Kirk Alloway seemed in a bleeze.

The grey walls of the little kirk are standing yet among the graves, though the last rafters of the ruined roof were carried off long since to be carved into mementos. The tombs of Lord Alloway's family occupy one end of the interior, and a partition wall has been built dividing off that portion, but otherwise the place remains unchanged. The bell still hangs above the eastern gable, and under it remains the little window with a thick mullion, the "winnock bunker" in which the astonished farmer, sitting on his mare, and looking through another opening in the side wall, saw the queer musician ensconced.

A more eerie spot on a stormy night could

hardly be imagined, the trees shrieking and groaning around, the Doon roaring in the darkness far below, while the thunder crashed overhead, and the lurid glare of lightning ever and again lit up the ruin. But with the unearthly accessories of warlocks and witches, corpse-lights and open coffins, with the screech of the pipes, and grotesque contortions of the dancers, the place must pass comparison in horror. Yet, inspired by "bold John Barleycorn," the farmer stared eagerly in on the revels, till, fairly forgetting himself in the height of his admiration, he must shout out "Weel dune, Cutty Sark!" Then, in a moment, as every reader is aware, the lights went out, the pipes stopped, and the wrathful revellers streamed after him like angry bees. A few bounds of his mare down that narrow, winding, and rather dangerous road would carry Tam to the bridge, and the clatter of terrified Maggie's hoofs as she plunged off desperately through the trees seems to echo in the hollow way yet. All the world knows how she carried her master in safety across the keystone of the bridge at the cost of her own grey tail. The feat was no easy one, for the single arch (still spanning the river there) was high and steep and narrow.

Beyond the Doon the old road rises inland, bowered high with ash and saugh trees, to the open country; and Tam, pale and sober no doubt, but breathing freer, had still twelve long miles before him to the far side of Kirkoswald in Carrick, where sat his wife—

> Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
> Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

AN OLD TULIP GARDEN.

A QUIET, sunny nook in the hollow it is, this square old garden with its gravelled walks and high stone walls; a sheltered retreat left peaceful here, under the overhanging woods, when the stream of the world's traffic turned off into another channel. The grey stone house, separated from the garden by a thick privet hedge and moss-grown court, is the last dwelling at this end of the quiet market-town, and, with its slate roof and substantial double storey, is of a class greatly superior to its neighbours, whose warm red tiles are just visible over the walls. It stands where the old road to Edinburgh dipped to cross a little stream, and, in the bygone driving days, the stage-coach, after rattling out of the town, and down the steep road here, between the white, tile-roofed houses, when it crossed the bridge opposite the door, began to ascend through deep, embowering woods. But a more direct

highway to the capital was opened many a year ago; just beyond the bridge a wall was built across the road; and the grey house with its garden was left secluded in the sunny hollow. The rapid crescendo of the coach-guard's horn no longer wakens the echoes of the place, and the striking of the clock every hour in the town steeple is the only sound that reaches the spot from the outside world.

The hot sun beats on the garden here all day, from the hour in the morning when it gets above the grand old beeches of the wood, till it sets away beyond the steeple of the town. But in the hottest hours it is always refreshing to look over the weather-stained tiles of the long low toolhouse at the mossy green of the hill that rises there, cool and shaded, under the trees. Now and then a bull, of the herd that feeds in the glades of the wood, comes down that shaded bank, whisking his tawny sides with an angry tail to keep off the pestering flies, and his deep bellow reverberates in the hollow. In the early morning, too, before the dewy freshness has left the air, the sweet mellow pipe of the mavis, and the fuller notes of the blackbird, float across from these green depths, and ever and again throughout

the day the clear whistle of some chaffinch comes from behind the leaves.

Standing among the deep box edgings and gravelled paths, it is not difficult to recall the place's glory of forty years ago—the glory upon which the ancient plum-trees, blossoming yet against the sunny walls, looked down. To the eye of Thought time and space obstruct no clouds, and in the atmosphere of Memory the gardens of the past bloom for us always.

Forty years ago! It is the day of the fashion for Dutch bulbs, when fabulous prices were paid for an unusually "fancy" specimen, and in this garden some of the finest of them are grown. The tulips are in flower, and the long narrow beds which, with scant space between, fill the entire middle of the garden, are ablaze with the glory of their bloom. Queenly flowers they are and tall, each one with a gentle pedigree—for nothing common or unknown has entrance here—and crimson, white, and yellow—the velvet petals of some almost black—striped with rare and exquisite markings, they raise to the sun their large chaste chalices. The perfection of shape is theirs, as they rise from the midst of their green, lance-like leaves; no amorous breeze ever

invades the spot to dishevel their array or filch their treasures; and the precious golden dust lies in the deep heart of each, untouched as yet save by the sunshine and the bee. When the noonday heat becomes too strong, awnings will be spread above the beds, for with the fierce glare, the petals would open out and the pollen fall before the delicate task of crossing had been done.

But see! through the gate in the privet hedge there enters as fair a sight. Ladies in creamy flowered muslins and soft Indian silks, shading their eyes from the sun with tiny parasols, pink and white and green,—grand dames of the county, and grander from a distance; gentlemen in blue swallow-tailed coats and white pantaloons—gallants escorting their ladies, and connoisseurs to examine the flowers—all, conducted by the owner, list-book in hand, advance into the garden and move along the beds.

To that owner—an old man with white hair, clear grey eyes, and the memory of their youthful red remaining in his cheeks—this is the gala time of the year. Next month the beds of ranunculus will bloom, and pinks and carnations will follow; but the tulips are his most famous flowers, and, for the few days while they are in

perfection, he leads about, with his old-world courtesy, replying to a question here, giving a name or a pedigree there, a constant succession of visitors. These are his hours of triumph. For eleven months he has gone about his beloved pursuit, mixing loams and leaf-moulds and earths, sorting, drying, and planting the bulbs, and tending their growth with his own hand—for to whose else could he trust the work?—and now his toil has blossomed, and its worth is acknowledged. Plants envied by peers, plants not to be bought, are there, and he looks into the heart of each tenderly, for he knows it a child of his own.

Presently he leads his visitors back into the house, across the mossy stones of the court where, under glass frames, thousands of auricula have just passed their bloom, and up the railed stair to the sunny door in the house-side. He leads them into the shady dining-room, with its furniture of dark old bees-waxed mahogany, where there is a slight refreshment of wine and cake—rare old Madeira, and cake, rich with eggs and Indian spice, made by his daughter's own hand. Jars and glasses are filled with sweet-smelling flowers, and the breath of the new-blown summer comes in through the open doors.

The warm sunlight through the brown linen blind finds its way across the room, and falls with subdued radiance on the middle picture on the opposite wall. The dark eyes, bright cheeks, and cherry mouth were those of the old man's wife—the wife of his youth. She died while the smile was yet on her lip, and the tear of sympathy in her eye; for she was the friend of all, and remains yet a tender memory among the neighbouring poor. The old man is never seen to look upon that picture; but on Sundays for hours he sits in reverie by his open Bible here in the room alone. In a velvet case in the corner press lies a silver medal. It was pinned to his breast by the Third George on a great day at Windsor long ago. For the old man, peacefully ending his years here among the flowers, in his youth served the king, and fought, as a naval officer, through the French and Spanish wars. As he goes quietly about, alone, among his garden beds, perchance he hears again sometimes the hoarse word of command, the quick tread of the men, and the deep roar of the heavy guns as his ship goes into action. The smoke of these battles rolled leeward long ago, and their glory and their wounds are alike

forgotten. In that press, too, lies the wonderful ebony flute, with its marvellous confusion of silver keys, upon which he used to take pleasure in recalling the stirring airs of the fleet. It has played its last tune; the keys are untouched now, and it is laid past, warped by age, to be fingered by its old master no more.

But his guests rise to leave, and, receiving with antique grace their courtly acknowledgments, he attends the ladies across the stone-paved hall to their carriages.

Forty years ago! The old man since then has himself been carried across that hall to his long home, and no more do grand dames visit the high-walled garden. But the trees whisper yet above it; the warmth of summer beats on the gravelled walks; and the flowers, lovely as of old in their immortal youth, still open their stainless petals to the sun.

BY THE BLASTED HEATH.

THE barometer has fallen somewhat since last night, and there are ominous clouds looming here and there in the west; but the sky remains clear blue overhead, the white road is dry and dazzling, and the sun as hot as could be wished. Out to the eastward the way turns along the top of the quaint fisher town, with its narrow lanes and throng of low thatched roofs, till at a sudden dip the little bridge crosses the river. Sweet Nairn! The river has given its name to the town. A hundred and forty years have passed since these clear waters, wimpling now in the sun, brought down from the western moors the life-blood of many a wounded Highlander fallen on dark Culloden. The sunny waters keep a memory still of the flight of the last Prince Charles.

Like a crow-flight eastward the road runs straight, having on the left, beyond the rabbit warren, the silver sand-beach and the sea, and

on the right the fertile farm-lands and the farther woods. The white line glistening on the horizon far along the coast to the east, is a glimpse of the treacherous hillocks of the Culbin shifting sands. They are shining now like silver in the calm forenoon; but, as if restless under an eternal ban, they keep for ever moving, and, when stirred by the strong sea-wind, they are wont yet to rise and rush and overwhelm, like the dust-storm of the Sahara. For two hundred years a goodly mansion and a broad estate have lain buried beneath those wastes, and what was once called the Garden of Moray is nothing now but a desolate sea of sand. They say that a few years ago an apple-tree of the ancient manor orchard was laid bare for some months by a drift, that it blossomed and bore fruit, and again mysteriously disappeared. Curious visitors, too, can still see, in the open spaces where the black earth of the ancient fields is exposed, the regular ridges and furrows as they were left by the flying farmers; and the ruts of cart-wheels two hundred years old are yet to be traced in the long-hidden soil. Flint arrowheads, bronze pins and ornaments, iron fish-hooks and spear-points, as well as numerous nails, and sometimes an ancient

coin, are to be picked up about the mouldered sites of long-buried villages; but the mansion of Kinnaird, the only stone house on the estate, lies yet beneath a mighty sandhill, as it was hidden by the historic storm which in three days overwhelmed nineteen farms, altered by five miles the course of a river, and blotted out a prosperous country-side. Pray Heaven that yonder terrible white line by the sea may not rise again some night on its tempest wings to carry that ruin farther!

Over the firth, looking backward as the highway at lasts bends inland, the red cliffs of Cromarty show their long line in the sun, and, with the yellow harvest-fields above them, hardly fulfil sufficiently the ancient name of the "Black Isle." Not a sail is to be seen on the open firth, only the far-stretching waters, under the sunny sky, bicker with the "many-twinkling smile of ocean." Here, though, two miles out of Nairn, where the many-ricked farmhouses lie snug among their new-shorn fields, the road rises into the trim village of Auldearn.

Neat as possible are the little gardens before the cottages, bright yet with late autumn flowers. Yellow marigolds glisten within the low fences

beside dark velvety calceolarias and creamy stocks; while the crimson flowers of tropeolum cover the cottage walls up to the thatch, and some pale monthly roses still bloom about the windows. A peaceful spot it is to-day, yet a spot with a past and a grim tale of a hundred years before Culloden. Here it was that in 1645 Montrose, fighting gallantly for the First Charles, drove back into utter rout the army of the covenanting Parliament. On the left, among sheepfolds and dry-dyke inclosures, lay his right wing with the royal standard; nearer, to the right, with their backs to the hill, stood the rest of his array with the cavalry; and here in the village street, between the two wings, his few guns deceived the enemy with a show of force. It was from the church tower, up there in front, that Montrose surveyed the position; and below, in the little churchyard and church itself, lie many of those who fell in the battle. They are all at peace now, the eastern Marquis and the western, Montrose and Argyle: long ago they fought out their last great feud, and departed.

The country about has always been a famous place for witches, and doubtless the three who fired Macbeth with his fatal ambition belonged

to Auldearn. Three miles beyond the village the road runs across the Hardmuir, and there it was that the awful meeting took place. The moor is planted now with pines, and the railway runs at less than a mile's distance; but even when the road is flooded with sunshine, there hangs a gloom among the trees, and a strange feeling of eeriness comes upon the intruder in the solitude. On the left a gate opens into the wood, and the witches' hillock lies at some distance out of sight.

Utterly silent the place is! Not a breath of air is moving, and the atmosphere has become close and sultry. There is no path, for few people follow their curiosity so far. Dry ditches and stumps of old trees make the walking difficult; withered branches of pine crackle suddenly sometimes under tread; and here and there the fleshy finger of a fungus catches the eye at a tree root.

And here rises the hillock. On its bald and blasted summit, in the lurid corpse-light, according to the old story,

> The weird sisters, hand in hand,
> Posters of the sea and land,
> Thus do go about, about,

when Macbeth, approaching the spot with Banquo, after victory in the west over Macdonald of the Isles, exclaims:

> So foul and fair a day I have not seen!

and the hags, suddenly confronting the general, greet him with the triple hail of Glamis, Cawdor, and King.

The blasted hillock was indeed a fit spot for such a scene. Not a blade of grass grows upon it; the withered needles and cones of the pines lie about, wan and lifeless and yellow; and on one side, where the witches emptied their horrid caldron, and the contents ran down the slope, the earth remains bare, and scorched, and black. Even the trees themselves which grow on the hillock appear of a different sort from those on the heath around.

Antiquaries set the scene of fulfilment of the witches infernal promptings—Macbeth's murder of King Duncan—variously at Inverness, Glamis, and Bọthgofuane, a smithy near Forres. Popular tradition, however, points to Cawdor, and less than seven miles from the fatal heath the Thane's great moated keep frowns yet among its woods.

But what is this? The air has grown suddenly dark; the gloom becomes oppressive; and in the close heat it is almost possible to imagine a smell of sulphur. A flash of lightning, a rush of wind among the tree-tops, and a terrible crash of thunder just overhead! A moment's silence, a sound as if all the pines were shaking their branches together, a deluging downpour of rain, and the storm has burst. The spirits of the air are abroad, and the evil genius of the place is awake in demoniac fury. The tempest waxes terrific. The awful gloom among the trees is lit up by flash after flash of lightning; the cannon of thunder burst in all directions; and the rain pours in torrents. The ghastly hags might well revisit the scene of their orgies at such a moment.

It is enough. The powers of the air have conquered. It is hardly safe, and by no means pleasant, to remain among the pines in such a storm. So farewell to the deserted spot, and a bee-line for the open country. To make up for the wetting, it is consoling to think that few enthusiasts have beheld so realistic a representation of the third scene of Macbeth.

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AMONG THE GALLOWAY BECKS.

IT rained heavily at intervals all night, and, though it has cleared a little since day-break, there is not a patch of blue to be seen yet in the sky, and the torn skirts of the clouds are still trailing low among the hills. The day can hardly brighten now before twelve o'clock, and as the woods, at anyrate, will be rain-laden and weeping for hours, the walk through "fair Kirkconnel Lea" is not to be thought of. The lawn, too, is out of condition for tennis. But see! the burn, brown with peat and flecked with foam, is running like ale under the bridge, and though the spate is too heavy for much hope of catching trout down here, there will be good sport for the trouble higher up among the moorland becks. Bring out the fishing-baskets, therefore, some small Stewart tacklings, and a canister of bait. Put up, too, a substantial sandwich and a flask; for the air among the hills is keen, and the mists are sometimes chilly.

Wet and heavy the roads are, and there will be more rain yet, for the pools in the ruts are not clear. The slender larch on the edge of the wood has put on a greener kirtle in the night, and stands forward like a young bride glad amid her tears. If a glint of sunshine came to kiss her there, she would glitter with a hundred rain-jewels. The still, heavy air is aromatic with the scent of the pines. By the wayside the ripening oats are bending their graceful heads after the rain, like Danae, with their golden burden, while the warrior hosts of the barley beyond hold their spiky crests white and erect.

The long, springing step natural on the heather shortens the road to the hills; and already a tempting burn or two have been crossed by the way. But nothing can be done without rods; and these have first to be called for at the shepherd's.

A quiet, far-off place it is, this shieling upon the moors, with the drone of bees about, and the bleating of sheep. The shepherd himself is away to the "big house" about some "hogs," but his wife, a weather-grey woman of sixty, with rough hospitable hands and kindly eyes, says that "maybe Jeanie will tak' a rod to the becks."

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Jeanie, by her dark glance, is pleased with the liberty; and indeed this lithe, handsome girl of fifteen will not be the least pleasant of guides, with her hair like the raven's wing, and on her clear features the thoughtful look of the hills.

Here are the rods, straight ash saplings of convenient length, with thin brown lines.

"Ye'll come back and tak' a cup o' tea; and dinna stay up there if it rains," says the goodwife, by way of parting.

Jeanie is frank and interesting in speech, with a gentle breeding little to be expected in so lonely a place. She has the step of a deer, and seems to know every tuft of grass upon the hills. There is not so much heather in Galloway as in the West Highlands. A long grey bent takes its place, and on mossy ground the white tufts of the cotton grass appear.

But here is a chance for a trial cast. A small burn comes down a side glen, and, just before it joins the main stream, runs foaming into a deeper pool. Keep well back from the bank, impale a tempting worm on the hook, and drop it in just where the water runs over the stones. Let the line go: the current carries it at once into the pool. There! The bait is held. Strike quickly down

stream: the trout all swim against the current. But it is not a fish; the hook has only caught on a stone. Disentangle it, and try again. This time there is no mistaking the wriggle at the end of the rod; with a jerk the hungry nibbler is whipped into the air, and alights among the grass, a dozen yards from his native pool. A plump little fish he proves, his pretty brown sides spotted with scarlet, as he gasps and kicks on *terra firma.*

Not another trout, however, can be tempted to bite in that eddy; the fish are too well fed by the spate, or too timid. "There will be more to catch," says Jeanie, "higher up the becks." She is right. Perhaps the trout in these narrow streamlets are less sophisticated than their kind lower down, for in rivulets so narrow as almost to be hidden by the bent-grass there seem plenty of fish eager to take the bait. These are darker in colour than the trout in the river, taking their shade from the peat, and though small, of course, averaging about a quarter of a pound in weight, are plump, and make merry enough rivalry in the whipping of them out.

But the mists droop lower overhead, and a small smirring rain has been falling for some time; so, as Jeanie, at least, has a fair basketful,

it will be best to put up the lines, discuss a sandwich under the shelter of the birches close by, and hold a council of war.

Desolate and silent are these grey hillsides. Hardly a sheep is to be seen; the far-off cry of the curlew is the only sound heard; and as the white mists come down and shroud the mountains, there is an eerie, solemn feeling, as at the near presence of the Infinite. Something, however, must be done. The rain is every moment coming down more heavily, and the small leaves of the birches afford but scant protection. Off, then; home as fast as possible! The mountain maid knows a shorter way over the hill; and lightly and swiftly she leads the Indian file along the narrow sheep-path. On the moor, amid the grey mist and rain, appear the stone walls of a lonely sheepfold; and just below, in the channel of the beck, lies the deep pool, swirling now with peaty water and foam, where every year they wash the flocks.

The shepherd's wife appears at her door. Her goodman is home. A great peat fire is glowing on the warm hearth, and she is "masking the tea." "Ye'll find a basin of soft water in the little bedroom there, and ye'll change ye're coats

and socks, and get them dried," says the kindly woman.

This is real hospitality. The rough coats and thick dry socks bespeak warm-hearted thoughtfulness; and a wash in clean water after the discomforts of fishing is no mean luxury. The small, low-raftered bedroom, with quaintly-papered walls, and little window looking out upon the moors, is comfortably furnished; and the stone-floored kitchen, clean and bright and warm, with geraniums flowering in the window, has as pleasant a fireside seat as could be desired. Why should ambition seek more than this, and why are so many hopeless hearts cooped up in the squalid city?

Here comes Jeanie down from the "loft," looking fresher and prettier than ever in her dry wincey dress, with a little bit of blue ribbon at the throat. The tea is ready; her mother has fried some of the trout, and the snowy table is loaded with thick white scones, thin oatmeal cakes, home-made bramble jelly, and the freshest butter. Kings may be blest; but what hungry man needs more than this? The shepherd, too, is well-read, for does not Steele and Addison's "Spectator" stand there on the shelf, along with Sir Walter

Scott, Robert Burns, and the Bible? With fare like this for body and mind, man may indeed become "the noblest work of God."

But an hour has passed, too quickly; the rain has cleared at last, and away to the south and west the clouds are lifting in the sunset. Yonder, under the clear green sky, glistens the treacherous silver of the Solway, and as far again beyond it in the evening light rises the dark side of Skiddaw, in Cumberland. The gravel at the door lies glistening after the shower, the yellow marigolds in the little plot are bright and opening, and the moorland air is perfumed with mint and bog-myrtle. A hearty handshake, then, from the shepherd, a warm pressing to return soon from his goodwife, a pleasant smile from Jeanie, and the road must be taken down hill with a swinging step.

IN KILT AND PLAID.

ALL dust has been swept from the causeways by the clear wind from the firth, as if in preparation for this great gala-day of the North. Unusual stir and movement fill the streets of the quiet Highland town, and the bright sunshine glitters everywhere on jewelled dirk and brooch and skeandhu. The clean pavements are ringing far and near with the quick, light step of the Highlander, and, from the number of tartans to be seen, it might almost be thought that the Fiery Cross was abroad, as in days of old, for the gathering of the clans.

Sad enough are the memories here of the last war summons of the chiefs. High-hearted, indeed, was the town on the morning when the clans marched forth under "Bonnie Prince Charlie" to do battle for the Stuart cause. But before an April day had passed, the gates received again, flying from fatal Culloden, the remnants of the broken chivalry of the North, and the

streets themselves shook under the thunder of the Lowland guns.

The wounds of the past, however, are healed, the feuds are forgotten, and the clouds of that bygone sorrow have been blown away by the winds of time. A lighter occasion now has brought gaiety to the town, and the heroes of the hour go decked with no ominous white cockade. Already in the distance the wild playing of the pipes can be heard, and at the sound the kilted clansmen hurry faster along the streets; for the business of the day is on the greensward, and the hill folk, gentle and simple, are gathering from far and near to witness the Highland games.

A fair and appropriate scene is the tourney-ground, with the mountains looking down upon it, purple and silent—the Olympus of the North. The eager crowd gathers thick already, like bees, round the barricade. Little knots of friends there, from glens among the hills, discuss the chances of their village hero. Many a swarthy mountaineer is to be seen, of pure Celtic blood, clear eyed and clean limbed, from far-off mountain clachan. Gamekeepers and ghillies there are, without number, in gala-day garb. And the

townspeople themselves appear in crowds. On every side is to be heard the emotional Gaelic of the hills, beside the sweet English speech for which the town is famous, and only sometimes one catches the broader accent of a Lowland tongue.

The lists have just been cleared, and the "chieftain" of the day has gathered his henchmen around him. The games are about to begin.

Yonder go the pipers, half a dozen of them, their ribbons and tartans streaming on the wind. Featly they step together to the quick tune of the shrill mountain march they are playing. Deftly they turn in a body at the boundary, and brightly the cairngorms of their broad silver shoulder-brooches flash all at once in the sun. No wonder it is that the Highlander has the tread of a prince, accustomed as he is to the spring of the heather beneath his feet, and to music like that in the air. The Highland garb, too, can hardly fail to be picturesque when it is worn by stalwart fellows like these.

The programme of the games is very full, and several competitions are therefore carried on at the same time. Here a dozen fleet youths speed past on the half-mile racecourse. Some lithe

ghillies yonder are doing hop, step, and leap to an astonishing distance. And, farther off, five brawny fellows are preparing to "put" the heavy ball. Out of the tent close by come some sinewy men, well stripped for the encounter, to try a bout of wrestling. A pair at a time, they wind their strong arms about each other, and each strains and heaves to give his rival a fall. One man scowls, and another smiles as he picks himself up after his overthrow—the sympathy of the crowd goes largely by these signs. Most, however, display the greatest good-humour, and every one must obey the ruling of the umpire. Gradually the two stoutest and heaviest men overcome the rest; and at last, the only champions remaining, they stand up to engage each other. The grey-headed man has some joke to make as he hitches up his belt before closing, and the bystanders laugh heartily at his pleasantry; but his opponent evidently looks upon the contest too seriously for that. Hither and thither they stagger in "the grips," the back of each as rigid as a plank at an angle of forty-five degrees. More than once they loosen hold for a breath, and again grasp each other, till at last, by dint of sheer strength, the grey-headed wrestler draws the younger man to himself, and,

with a sudden toss, throws him clear upon the ground.

The slim youths at the pole-vaulting look like white swallows as they swing high into the air on their long staves to clear the bar; and a roar of applause from the far end of the lists, where the dogged "tug of war" has been going on, tells that one of the teams of heavy fellows straining at the rope has been hauled over the brink into the dividing ditch. The brawny giants who were throwing the axle a little while ago are just now breathing themselves, and will be tossing the mighty caber by and by. And ever and anon throughout the day there float upon the breeze the wild strains of the competing pipers —pibrochs and strathspeys and "hurricanes of Highland reels."

Meanwhile the grand pavilion has filled. Lord and lady, earl and marquis and duke are there. And beside these are others, heads of families, who count their chieftainship, it may be, through ten centuries, and who are to be called neither esquire nor lord, but just —— of that Ilk. Chiefs by right of blood, they need no other title than their name.

The presence of so much that is noble and

illustrious lends a feudal interest to the games, and imports to the rivalry something of that desire to appear well in the eyes of the chief which was once so powerful an influence in the Highlands. The young ghillie here, who has outstripped all but one competitor at throwing the hammer, feels the stimulus of this. He knows not only that his sweetheart's eyes are bent eagerly upon him from the barrier at hand, but that he has a chance of distinguishing himself before his master and "her ladyship," who are watching from under the awning yonder. So he breathes on his hands, takes a firm grasp of the long ash handle, and, vigorously whirling the heavy iron ball round his head, sends it with all his strength across the lists. How far has it gone? They chalk the distance up on a board — 95½ feet. There is a clapping of hands from the crowd, and a waving of white kerchiefs from the pavilion. He is sure of winning now, and the shy, pretty face at the barrier flushes with innocent pride. Is he not *her* hero?

There, on the low platform before the judges, go the dancers, two after two. They are trimly dressed for the performance, and wear the thin,

low-heeled Highland shoes, while the breasts of some of them are fairly panoplied in gold and silver medals won at former contests. Mostly young lads, it is wonderful how neatly they perform every step, turning featly with now one arm in the air and now the other. Cleverly they go through the famous sword dance over crossed claymores, and in the wild whirl of the Reel o' Tulloch seem to reach the acme of the art.

But in the friendly rivalry of skill and strength the day wears on. The races in sacks and over obstacles, as well as the somewhat rough "bumping in the ring," have all been decided; the "best dressed Highlander" has received his meed of applause; and the sun at last dips down behind the hills. Presently, as the mountain-sides beyond the river are growing grey, and their shadows gather upon the lists, the spectators melt by degrees from the barricades, and in a slow stream move back into the town. By and by the Assembly Rooms will be lit up, and carriages will begin to arrive with fair freights for the great Caledonian Ball. But, long before that, the upland roads will be covered with pedestrians and small mountain conveyances with family

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parties — simple folk, all pleased heartily with their long day's enjoyment, and wending their way to far-off homes among the glens, where they will talk for another twelvemonth of the great feats done at the gathering here by Duncan or Fergus or Hamish.

AT THE FOOT OF BEN LEDI.

SIT here in the stern of the boat, and let her drift out on the glassy waters of the loch. After the long sultry heat of the day it is refreshing to let one's fingers trail in these cool waters, and to watch the reflection of the hills above darkening in the crystal depths below. Happy just now must be the speckled trout that dwell in the loch's clear depths; and when the fiery-flowering sun rolls ablaze in the zenith there are few mortals who will not envy the cool green domain of the salmon king. But now that the sunset has died away upon the hills, like "the watch-fires of departing angels," a breath of air begins mysteriously to stir along the shore, and from the undergrowth about the streamlet that runs close by into the loch, blackbird and water-ousel send forth more liquid pipings. The cuckoos, that all day long have been calling to each other across loch and strath, now with a more restful "chuck! chu-chu, chu, chuck!" are

flitting, grey flakes, from coppice to coppice, preparatory to settling for the night. The grouse-cocks' challenge, "kibeck, kibeck, kibeck!" can still be heard from their tourney-ground on the moraine at the moor's edge; and from the heath above still comes the silvery "whorl-whorl-whorl" of the whaup. These sounds can be heard far off in the stillness of the dusk.

But listen to this mighty beating of the waters, and look yonder! From the shadow of the hazels on the loch's margin comes the royal bird of Juno, pursuing his mate. In his eager haste he has left the water, and with outstretched neck, beating air and loch into foam with his silver wings, he rushes after her. She, with the tantalising coyness of her sex, has also risen from the water, and, streaming across the loch, keeps undiminished the distance between herself and her pursuer. At this, finding his efforts vain, he gives up the chase, subsiding upon the surface with a force which sends the foam-waves curling high about his breast. Disdainfully he turns his back upon the fair, and, without once inclining his proud black beak in her direction, makes steadily for the shore. This, however, does not please the lady. She turns, looks after her in-

constant lover, and, meeting with no response, begins slowly to sail in his direction. Suddenly again at this, with snowy pinions erect, neck curved gallantly back, and the calm waters foaming round his breast, he surges after her, ploughing up the loch into shining furrows. Again the coy dame flees, again and again the same amorous manœuvres are gone through, and when night itself falls, the splendid birds will still be dallying over their long-certain courtship. No plebeian affair is the mating of these imperial denizens of the loch. Seldom do mortals witness even this wooing of the swans.

More commonplace, though not, perhaps, less happy, are the three brown ducks and their attentive drake, which having, one after another, splashed themselves methodically on the flat stone by the margin of the loch, now swim off in a string for home. Young trout are making silver circles in the water as they leap at flies under the grassy bank; and the keen-winged little swallows that skim the surface, sometimes tip the glassy wave with foot or wing.

Before the daylight fades there are beautiful colours to be seen on shore. The fresh young reeds that rise at hand like a green mist out of

the water deepen to a purple tint nearer the margin. The march dyke that comes down to the shallows is covered with the red chain-mail of a small-leaved ivy; and the gean-tree beside it, that a week or two ago raised into the blue sky creamy coral-branches of blossom, still retains something of its fragile loveliness. On the stony meadow beyond, the golden whinflower is fading now, but is being replaced by the paler yellow splendour of the broom. The rich blush-purple of some heathy banks betrays the delicate blossom of the blaeberry, and patches of brown show where the young bracken are uncurling their rusty tips.

And silent and fair on the mountain descends the shadowy veil of night. Darkening high up there against the sapphire heaven, the dome-topped hill, keeping watch with the stars, has treasured for twenty centuries strange memories of an older world. Whether or not, in the earth's green spring, it served as a spot of offering for some primeval race, no man now can tell. But long before the infant Christ drew breath among the far-off Jewish hills, grave Druid priests ascended here to offer worship to their Unknown God. On the holy Beltane eve, the First of May, the

concourse gathered from near and far, and as the sun, the divine sign-manual set in the heavens, arose out of the east, they welcomed his rising with an offering of fire. From sea to sea across dim Scotland, from the storm-cloven peaks of Arran to the sentinel dome of the Bass, could be seen this mountain summit; and from every side the awed inhabitants, as they looked up and beheld the clear fire-jewel glittering on Ben Ledi's brow, knew that Heaven had once more favoured them with the sacred gift of flame. For the light on the mountain-top, like the altar fires of the Chaldean seers on the hills of the East of old, was understood to be kindled by the hand of God; every hearth in the land had been quenched, and the people waited for the new Bal-tein, or Baal-fire from Heaven, for another year.

Rude these people may have been — though that is by no means certain,—but few races on earth have had a nobler place of worship than this altar-mountain, which they called the Hill of God.

The climber on Ben Ledi to-day passes, near the summit, the scene of a sad, more modern story. On the shoulder of the mountain lies a small, dark tarn. It is but a few yards in width,

yet once it acted a part in a terrible tragedy. Amid the snows of winter, and under a leaden heaven, a funeral party was crossing the ridge, when there was a crash; the slow wail of the pipes changed into a shriek of terror, and a hundred mourners, with the dead they were carrying, sank in the icy waters to rise no more. That single moment sufficed to leave sixty women husbandless in Glen Finglas below. No tablet on that wind-swept moor records the half-forgotten disaster; only the eerie lapping of the lochlet's waves fills the discoverer with strange foreboding; and at dusk, it is said, the lonely ptarmigan may be seen, like souls of the departed, haunting the fatal spot.

On a knoll at the mountain foot, where the Leny leaves Loch Lubnaig, lies the little Highland burial-place to which the clansmen were bearing their dead comrade. Only a low stone wall now remains round the few quiet graves; but here once stood the chapel of St Bride, and from the Gothic arch of its doorway Scott, in his "Lady of the Lake," describes the issuing of a blithesome rout, gay with pipe-music and laughter, when the dripping messenger of Roderick Dhu rushed up and thrust into the

hand of the new-made groom the Fiery Cross of the Macgregors—

> "The muster place is Lanrick mead;
> Speed forth the signal! Norman, speed!"

Well did the poet paint the parting of bride and groom; and to-day on the mossy stones of the little burial-place are to be read the wistful words of many who have bid each other since then a last good-bye. Surely the arcana of earth's divinest happiness is only opened by the golden key of love. Sweet, indeed, must be that companionship which unclasps not with resignation even when sunset is fading upon the hills of life, and the shadows are coming in regretful eyes, but would fain stretch forth its yearnings through the pathways of a Hereafter. Simple and lacking excitement may be the lives of the folk who dwell under these hills, but something of the sublime surely is latent in hearts whose hopes extend beyond a time when heaven and earth shall have passed away.

CADZOW FOREST.

HIGH on the edge of the crumbling cliff here, like the grey eyrie of some keen-winged falcon, hangs the ruined keep of Cadzow. Bowered and all but hidden by the leafy luxuriance of "the oak and the ash and the bonnie ivy-tree," with the Evan roaring down its rocky bed far below at the foot of the sheer precipice, there is enough left of this ancestral home of the Hamiltons to give some idea of its ancient strength. Perched where it was unassailable on one side save by foes who had the gift of wings; on the other hand, the deep moss-grown moat and the massive remains of thick walls tell how secure a refuge it gave to its possessors. Secluded, too, in the depths of the old Caledonian forest, the fastness had endless facilities for secret communication and for safe hiding in case of necessity, and the deeds of its owners need have been subject to the curiosity of on prying eye. Who can tell what captives have

languished in the dungeons into which now, at places through the broken arch, the sunshine makes its way? Birds have built their nests, and twitter joyously about their callow young, where once only the sighs of the prisoner were heard and the iron clank of his chain. Alas! he had not the linnet's wing to fly out and speed away along these sunny woodland paths.

But not vindictive above their peers were the chiefs of the ancient race that held these baronies. Rather has the gleam of romance come here to lighten the records of their gloomy age. For it was within these walls, tradition says, that Queen Mary found an asylum upon the night following that of her escape from Loch Leven Castle—a tradition the more likely to be true since the Hamilton Palace of that day was but a rude square tower. And it is easy to imagine how in that sweet May morning, the second of her new-born liberty and of her fresh-reviving hopes, the eyes of the fair unfortunate Queen may have filled with tears of happiness as she gazed from this casement forth upon the green waving forests and the silver Evan in its gorge below, and heard in the courtyard and the woods behind the tramp of horses and the ring of arms. Alas! whatever

her frailties, she suffered sorely for them. There are few perhaps whose errors lie so much at the door of circumstance. From the Rout of Solway, which heralded her birth, to the last sad scene at Fotheringay, her life was a walk of tears; and the student of her reign is tempted to think that had she been a less lovable woman she might have been a more successful queen. That was the last gleam of sunshine in her life, the eleven days between Loch Leven and Langside. Short was the respite, but it must have been sweet, and doubtless these Hamiltons made chivalrous hosts. They fought for her gallantly at anyrate, if in vain, for they were the foremost to rush against her enemies' spears in the steep narrow lane at Langside.

And at last she rode away from this place, surrounded by a brave little troop of nobles, their armour glancing in the sun as they caracoled off along these grassy forest glades. Then amid the restored quiet, only the whisper of the woods about them and the murmur of the river far below, the women waited here, listening. Presently, sudden and ominous, they heard a sound in the distance—cannonading near Glasgow, ten miles away. The Queen had been intercepted

on her journey to Dunbarton. There was not much of the sound, and it died feebly.

Hours afterwards, anxious waiting hours, down these forest avenues, slowly, with drooping crest and broken spear, came riding the lord of the castle, haggard, and almost alone. For of the gallant gentlemen who had followed him to Langside many had fallen upon the field, and the rest were scattered and fleeing for their lives.

What sorrowings then for those who would never return must there have been within these walls—what aching hearts for those who had escaped! The smoke of the houses in Clydesdale, fired by the victorious army of the Regent, could almost be seen from here; and day after day news came of friends taken and friends in flight, until it was whispered that the Queen herself was a prisoner in the hands of the English Warden. A weary and anxious time it must have been; but the danger passed, and the hour of reprisal came.

Through these woods, according to the tradition preserved by Sir Walter Scott, on a January afternoon less than two years after the battle of Langside, a hunting-party was returning to the castle. Amid the fast-falling shadows of the winter day they were bringing home their quarry—

the wild bull whose race still roams these glades; and the guests and huntsmen were making merry over the success of their sport. There was the jingle, too, of hawk-bells, and the bark of hounds in leash. But their lord rode in front, silent, with clenched hand and clouded brow. He had not forgotten the misfortune that had befallen his house, and news of a fresh insult had but lately quickened his anger over it. The estate of one of his kinsmen, Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh, had been confiscated to a favourite of the Regent, and the new possessor, it was said, had used his power with such severity, in turning out Bothwellhaugh's wife and new-born infant on a freezing night, that the poor lady had become furiously mad. Brooding darkly and bitterly on these evils, the chief was drawing near the castle, when there was suddenly heard approaching the heavy gallop of a horse, and in another moment Bothwellhaugh sprang to the earth before him. His face was wild and pale, and his steed, bespattered with foam and blood, drooped its head in exhaustion. Vengeance swift and dire had fallen upon the Regent, and, twenty miles away, in Linlithgow Palace, the birthplace of the sister he had dethroned, he lay dying. It

is for a higher Judge than man to say whether his death was that of a martyr or of a miscreant; but at the time there were not wanting those who held that Bothwellhaugh satisfied with one blow his own private feud and the wrath of heaven over the distresses of the Queen. The brass matchlock, curiously enough a rude sort of rifle, with which the deed was done, lies yet in the palace of the Hamiltons.

Three hundred years ago and more it all happened, and the moss grows dark and velvety now on the ruined bridge over which once rang the hoofs of Queen Mary's steed; but the grey and broken walls, silent amid the warm summer sunshine, recall these memories of the past. There could be no sweeter spot to linger near. Foamy branches of hawthorn in spring fill the air here with their fragrance; and in the woodland aisles lie fair beds of speedwell, blue as miniature lakes. Under the dry, crumbling banks, too, among tufts of delicate fern, are to be seen the misty, purple-flowering nettle and the soft green shoots of brier. Overhead, in summer luxuriance, spread the broad, palm-like fronds of the chestnut; close by, the soft greenery of the beech lets the tinted sunshine through; and

amid them rises the dark and sombre pine. But, venerable above all, on these rolling forest lands, the shattered girth of many an ancient oak still witnesses to an age that may have seen the rites of the Druids. Monarchs of the primeval wilds, these gigantic trees, garlanded now with the green leaf of another year, need acres each for the spread of their mighty roots; while as withies in comparison appear the cedars of a century.

And down these forest avenues, the home of his sires from immemorial time, where his hoof sinks deep in the primeval sward, and there is no rival to answer his hoarse bellow of defiance, comes the lordly Caledonian bull. Never yet has the race been tamed, and the cream-white hide and black muzzle, horn, and hoof bespeak the strain of its ancient blood. There is a popular belief, indeed, that when the white cattle become extinct the house of Hamilton will pass away. Here, then, in the forgotten solitude, where seldom along the grassy woodland ways comes the foot of the human wanderer, the mountain bull keeps guard with his herd over the scene of that old and sorrowful story.

A FISHER TOWN.

KEEN and strong, and steady to-night in the gathering dusk, the wind is coming up the firth out of the east. Darkling clouds roll low along the sky, and, before the breeze, the waves in their unnumbered hosts, like dark hussars white-crested, ride past to break upon the beach-sands yonder inland at Fort George. The full, deep gale brings with it out of the shadowy east the health of a hundred tumbling seas, and sets the glad life dancing in lip, and eye, and heart; while the music of the rushing waves, like the drums of far-off armies, stirs the soul with the daring of great purposes. Little need, therefore, is there to pity the fisher women and children far out at the ebb-tide edge gathering bait among the reefs. Clear are their eyes as the sea-pools over which they bend, and while sun and wind have made their skins brown as the wet sand itself, many a drawing-room beauty would give

her diamonds for such a wealth of raven hair. Even at this distance the happy voices of the children, a pleasant murmur, speak of free and simple hearts. Sport on, happy children! Rejoice in your brown brood, simple mothers! Not yours are the pale cheek and the wasted form, the lifeless eye and the languid step. Sometimes, it may be, when the winds rise and the waves come thundering upon the beach, there are anxious hours for you because of husband or father tossing out there somewhere in the darkness; sometimes, alas! a sore heart and many tears when the little knot of sad and silent men come up from the beach and lay gently upon its pillow the pale wet face that will speak to you no more. But yours, at least, are not the fetid atmosphere of cities and their weary miles of pavement; for you the smile of Heaven is not veiled by a sin-black pall of smoke; and when the dark angel does come to your humble dwellings, and the last "Good-byes!" have to be said, it is not amid the heartless roar and the squalor of city streets, but amid the sweet, salt smell, and listening to the strange and solemn "calling" of the sea.

A race by themselves are these fisher-folk,

mixing little with the people of the upper town, and keeping very much by customs of their own. Danish, very likely, or Norse, in origin, their blood remains all but as pure yet as it was when their forefathers landed on these shores. Seven miles to the eastward along the coast, where the white sand-line gleams on the horizon, in places exposed by the shifting dunes, are still to be found the remains of villages which belonged to the ancestors of these folk, and by these remains—bronze pins, fish-hooks, broken pottery, and shell heaps—it seems clear that the ancient villagers lived very much the same life as is lived here to-day. Only, of late years the steamship and the School Board have made some invasions upon traditional ideas.

At hand, spread on the bent-grass to dry, and brown as seaweed itself, lie miles of fishing-nets, with their rows of worn cork floats; for the herring fishery of the season is over, the west coast boats have gone home through the Canal, and the gear is being laid by for the winter. In the end of April it will be wanted again for the Loch Fyne fishing, but it will be the end of June before the herring nets are used on the east coast again. The good woman

coming up the shore below with her creel and pail of bait—mussels, sand-worms, and silver-gleaming needle-fish—is going now to bait for the later white-fishing the "long lines," with their hundreds of hooks, which her husband and his sons will take out to set before daylight. To-morrow morning, when the boat comes home, she will have to fill her creel with the haddocks, and sell them along the country-side; or perhaps the fish will be bought at auction by the curers, to be smoked with the smoke of fragrant fir-cones into succulent, appetising "speldings."

The quay-head in the morning, when the fish auction is going on, makes a characteristic sight, and displays the only occasion on which anything like business wakens in the quiet place.

The boats have come in with the running tide, and lie moored to great iron rings in the landing-place. Curious names they have, mostly double—the "Elspat and Ann," or the "Ann and Margaret"—probably to represent the wives or sweethearts of two partners. In the boats themselves lie together heaps of lines, ropes, and sails, with fish gleaming here and there among them; while the quay is littered with oars and spars and cables, enough to make walking a fine art. The fish

have been lifted out of each boat by its crew, and when the women have divided them into glittering heaps—a heap for each man and one for the boat—the skipper sells the boat's heap, and its price settles that of the others. Here the shrewd bargaining power of the fisher-folk comes out, trained, as it is, by the narrow path they tread between means and ends; while here the women who have no man's hand to bring them home the harvest of the deep contrive to find their bread by buying the fish they will afterwards retail. The whole transaction is primitive in the extreme, but one that sufficiently serves its purpose.

A life of which this is the busiest scene may appear monotonous to the dweller in cities, but again and again there come hours of stern excitement which prove the manhood of the race. There have been times when every boat of the fishing fleet as it came rushing ashore had to be caught, at peril of life and limb, breast-deep in the furious surf, and landed safely with its occupants. Yet men are ever most plentiful when the work is most dangerous, and never yet has the lifeboat lacked a crew.

Once, indeed, a few years ago it happened that

the men, all but one or two, were away at the fishing, when word was brought that a Norwegian timber-ship was going to pieces on the treacherous shifting sands yonder, seven miles away. A tremendous surf was beating upon the beach, and the lifeboat coxswain and crew were riding the storm out, cabled to their herring-nets somewhere in the North Sea. In the upper town, however, there was visiting his brother just then the captain of an East Indiaman, home upon holiday, and the message was handed to him as he sat at breakfast. In half an hour, sailor-like, he had the lifeboat out, manned with a scratch crew of volunteers, and run down the beach. Then began the difficulty and peril. By strong and willing hands the boat was run out into the surf, but again and again she was caught by a huge wave and driven back. Three-quarters of an hour's hard rowing it took to pull her out to the fourth sea. A little longer, and she hoisted her sail, and went plunging off into the howling wilderness of waters.

Would she accomplish her mission? Would she and the brave hearts on board her ever themselves come back? Old men and fishers' wives watched her from the quay-head till she

disappeared among the waves, and then they waited, anxious and fearful.

The day passed without tidings of her, and at last night began to fall. The anxiety of the watchers had become intense, when suddenly some one caught a glimpse of white bows gleaming far out over the waves. There she was, clearly now, coming like a sea-bird through the driving spray. Who could tell whether she had won or lost lives? Presently her thwarts were seen black with men. She had accomplished her mission; but the question yet remained—how were they to be landed? Alas! all might yet be lost in the terrible surf. There was a strong hand at the helm, however; the full tide had covered the bar, and, with a single swoop, she shot into the harbour, every man safe, amid the wild huzzas of the waiting throng.

One glad heart there was too full for words. Among the ringing cheers, as the crowd made way for its hero, she could only in silence take her husband's arm. It was the captain's wife.

A LOCH-SIDE SUNDAY.

A QUARTER to twelve. How quiet it is! Only the mellow note of a mavis sometimes in the oak woods, and the clear, high treble of a shilfa, break on the stillness. The tinkle of the little village smithy, down among the trees, is silent. It is the Day of Rest. There was a shower of rain in the early morning; it has laid the dust, and left the road firm and cool to the tread. Everything is refreshed: wild rosebuds, red and white, are everywhere opening after the shower; the yellow broom-blossom is softer and brighter; the delicate forget-me-nots have a lovelier blue; and beyond, in the shady spaces of the woods, the foxgloves raise their spires of drooping bells. The rain, too, has brought out afresh every wayside scent; the new-cut clover there in the meadow, the flowerless sweetbrier and clambering yellow honeysuckle here in the hedge, all fill the air with fragrance. The tide is out, almost at full ebb, and from the stony beach

below sometimes the gentle swaying of the air brings up faintly the fresh smell of seaweed. The sun is very warm, and the last of the clouds, floating far up in the sky, are melting into the blue. The air is clear yet, though, and on the other side of the loch the sheep—small white dots—can be quite well seen feeding high up on the green patches of the mountain. A little later the heather will begin to bloom on these brown hillsides, and the mighty Bens, seated yonder on their rugged thrones, will put on their imperial purple. The loch lying calm below reflects perfectly every detail of the opposite hills—shrub and heather and shieling! Even the white gull, circling slowly a yard above the water, casts its image on the glassy mirror. Out on the open firth, too, beyond the low-lying points at the mouth of the loch, the sea, like cloth-of-silver, glistens in the sun.

Hark! the bell on the roof of the little kirk among the trees has begun to ring, and already, in groups of two and three, the people are coming along the loch-side and down the road from the hills. These early arrivals mostly travel a long way to attend the service. From quiet farm-houses in lonely straths, and solitary shielings on

the upland moors, some of the simple-hearted folk have wended for hours. Here are heavy-footed shepherds, shaggy-bearded and keen-eyed, in rough mountain tweed and flat Balmoral bonnets, grasping their long hazel staves, and accompanied, more than one of them, by a faithful old collie. There are comely lasses, of sun-browned pleasant features, and soft hill speech, in sober straw hats, strong boots, and serviceable dresses of homespun, with, perhaps, a keepsake kerchief in the bosom for a bit of colour. Over high stiles, across uneven stepping-stones, and through rugged glens of birch and rowan, they have made their way to attend the kirk. Farmers from ten and twelve miles distance come jogging in with their wives and daughters in primitive two-wheeled conveyances, built for strength, and drawn by shaggy little Highland horses. Here, too, come the people from the village—bent old women, their wrinkled faces hidden under snowy linen mutches, carrying in their hands, with the long-treasured Bible, a sprig of southernwood and sweetwilliam to smell at during sermon; the big-bearded, big-handed blacksmith, looking wonderfully clean for once; the lithe, sallow-faced tailor; and the widow who keeps the store. All

linger in the sunny graveyard among the moss-grown stones, and while the beadle in the porch keeps ringing the bell, greetings are exchanged among friends who meet here once a week from distant ends of the parish. The gamekeeper has a word to say to the piermaster, the school-mistress comes up talking with the housekeeper from the castle, the old men exchange snuff-boxes with solemn nods, and young M'Kenzie, who is expecting to be made the Duke's forester, takes the opportunity of getting near and whispering something of interest to the blacksmith's pretty daughter.

Presently, however, they all move into the kirk, dropping their "collection" as they pass, upon the plate in the porch, where two deacons stand to watch it. Inside, all is very still, though a swallow that has flown in and skims about the roof gives an occasional chirrup, and the regular rhythm of the bell is faintly heard. The doors remain open, yet the sunshine, falling in on the yellow walls, makes the air very warm, and through the clear lattice windows the cattle in the glebe close by can be seen whisking the flies from their sides under the larches. The old precentor has just come in from the vestry with his list of

the psalm-tunes, and in his seat under the pulpit, is polishing his spectacles by way of preparation.

At last the bell stops: there follows a tramp, tramp of heavy feet, and the youth of the parish, who by immemorial custom have been hanging about outside till the last moment, file solemnly down the aisles to their seats. The beadle carries in Bible and psalm-book, and, after a moment's pause, the minister, in ample black gown and white neck-bands, reverently enters and ascends the pulpit.

All is perfectly still for a minute while he bows his head; and then in a low tremulous voice he reads the verses of the rhymed psalm that is to be sung. The precentor leads off the singing, for there is no organ, and as he beats time with his tuning-fork, the praise that ascends, if not perhaps of perfect harmony, is at least sincere. More is felt by these simple folk than is apparent on the surface. Associations of many sorts influence them in the place. Pulpit and pew have been occupied and passed from father to son for generations; memories of the past and hopes of the future alike gather here, and the place is sacred to them all. The grey-haired minister, standing where his father once stood

hears rising about him, with the praise of the child lips he has baptized, the quavering voices of those who were young when he was young; and his thoughts are of years gone by. The young forester in the raftered "loft" listens to the singing of a sweet voice in the choir, and his eyes grow bright with the hope and strength of days to come. The youthful look forward; the aged look back; and both feelings are an inspiration of worship.

When the minister has read and prayed — a solemn extempore prayer—and they have sung again, the sermon, the principal part of the service, begins. The opening of the discourse is like the peaceful morning hour of summer. It is the calm, dispassionate statement of truth. Has this no effect? Their minds must be moved by fear. Cloud after cloud rolls up into the sky: the preacher is marshalling the battalions of his argument. Darker and darker they become. No ray of hope can pierce that leaden heaven. All deepens to the gloom of despair. Joy has fled: the twitter of little birds is still. There comes a sharp question—a flash of lightning; then, in a thunder-roll of denunciation, argument after argument overwhelms the sinner: the clouds

rent, earth trembles, rain falls. Are the hearers not awed? They must be stirred by gratitude. The thunders cease, the storm sweeps past, the clear light of hope shines again upon earth; a lark flutters up into the sky, and the last clouds of fear are melted afar into the rugged gold of sunset. The sermon is ended. Those who were not moved by reason, awed by terror, or inspired by hope, have been thrilled by the earnestness of the preacher. The old have listened with reverent, downcast looks, shaking their bent heads ever and again in solemn conviction; while the young have sat with earnest eyes riveted on the minister. The discourse has continued without a break for three-quarters of an hour, and when it is over, the hushed stillness lasts for more than a minute. The final prayer is short, condensing and putting in practical form the aspirations of the sermon, not neglecting, either, to stir pity "for all we love, the poor, the sad, the sinful." A "paraphrase" is sung with renewed fervour, and a solemn benediction ends the service.

Slowly the congregation melts out of the kirk. It has been very close inside, and the faint air moving out of doors is most refreshing. The tide is flowing in now with a gentle ripple on

the beach, and the little boat at anchor off-shore has drifted round with the current. The sun is striking the west side of the mossy tombstones, the shadows of the trees have shifted on the grass, and all traces of the morning shower have disappeared. The people linger yet a little about the graveyard to talk over points of the sermon. Presently the minister comes out of the vestry, and, stopping here and there to say a kindly word to some of the old folk, who are pleased by the attention, passes across the glebe to the pleasant white manse resting, with deep eaves, among its fuchsias and rose-trees.

THE GLEN OF GLOOM.

SILENCE falls upon the gay deck of the floating palace, as, with quickly pulsing paddles, she throbs on amid the solitude of these dark waters under the mountains. Far away to the south behind, like silver in the sunshine, lies the open sea chased by the wind; but above the narrowing channel in front the rugged Bens, sombre and vast, frown down upon the invader. Purple-apparelled these Bens are now, like allied kings asleep after their battles with the storm-giants of the North. For the black waves in winter leap here savagely, and gnash their gleaming teeth against the mountain-sides; the storm-winds roar in anger as they buffet the iron breasts of their captors; and the silent frost strains with his strong embrace to crack the great ribs of the Titans. But the everlasting hills live on, and the sunshine kisses them again and the summer rain weeps upon their scars, while their children, the

dwellers about their feet, look up and learn to love them for their memories with a love strong as life itself. Many a Highland heart failed long ago on the march through the Egyptian desert when the pipes wailed out "Lochaber no more." These are the great mountains of Lochaber rising huge against the sky in front; and even the gay tourist, here on the sunny deck, feels a silence gather about his heart as he is borne on under their shadows. The young bride by the companion-way nestles closer to her husband as, with grave blue eyes, she gazes upon the solemn loneliness of the hills.

But listen! Do you hear? Wild and sweet in the distance over the water comes the sound. It is the pipes, and they are playing "Flora Macdonald's Lament." Yonder, down near the shore—you can make them out through the glass—a shooting party has picnicked, and they have brought the piper with them. How the colour deepens on the cheek of the old Highland gentleman here at the sound! He is just returning from many years' residence abroad, and for the last hour, leaning over the deck-rail, he has been feasting his heart upon the sight of the mountains. "There is no music

like that music," he exclaims, "over the water and among the hills." To a Highlander, indeed, the sound of the pipes is full of many memories, like "the sough of the south wind in the trees" of an autumn night. The folk on deck who are from the south will know something of it now perhaps. Yesterday, no doubt, some of them supposed the ragged vagabond who strutted and blew on a pier-head as the steamer passed, a specimen of the pibroch-players. They should see a chief's own hereditary piper march on the castle terrace, cairngorm and silver gleaming about him, ribbons streaming on the wind, and tartans afloat!

And the steamer draws in to the little wooden pier under the mountain, where the horses are waiting. A quiet and peaceful spot it is, with the clear green waves washing in among the shining, clinging mussels, to break upon the dark blue shingle. Only twice a day is the peaceful murmur of these waters broken upon by the coming of the great palace steamers, when there is a momentary stir and excitement, the gleam of white dresses as visitors come ashore, and the getting of the few mail-bags on board. Then presently with churning paddles the steamer

departs up the loch, leaving behind it on the dark waters a long trail of foam; the visitors stow themselves like clustering bees upon the high coaches that are in waiting; and the place falls a-dreaming again amid the coming and going of the tides.

The five horses in the foremost coach to-day are quite fresh, and as the steamer was half an hour late, they have grown restive under the reins. The driver now, however, after looking behind to see that all is secure, makes his whip crack like a rifle shot, and with prancing leader and gallant clatter of hoofs the cavalcade moves off. Above, the mountain-side, tufted with heather and bracken and dark with trees, overhangs the road, and from the high box-seat one might drop an acorn into the waves that wash the foot of the precipice forty feet below. After the throbbing deck of the great steamer, and the oily smell of engines and cook's galley, it is pleasant to be bowling along a firm road with the honey-scent of the heather in the air, and—yes, it is quite certain—the fragrance of peat smoke. For as the road turns inland the village opens to view, a double line of dark blue dwellings along the mountain foot. Cold, perhaps, these cottages look to a southern eye accustomed

to warm red brick; but in winter, when the storms come roaring down the glens, and the hills are hidden by falling snow, the hearths within, heaped with glowing sea-coal and peat, are cosy enough for all that. Then the brown fishermen, home from the herring harvest of the North Sea, talk over the year's success as they mend their gear by the fireside, and swarthy fellows shut out by the snowdrifts from their work in the great slate quarries on the mountain, gather to hear the week-old news that has come by the trading steamer. Just now it is only women and children who come to the doors to see the coach go past.

The horses dash on at a gallop through the village and into the mouth of the great glen that opens, rugged and wild and dark, in front. Between the mountain walls of that deep and lonely pass reigns an awful silence now, broken only by the far-off cry of the curlew and the beating of the wild-bird's wing. Unsought in the corries, the hazel-nuts are ripening and the rowan clusters growing red; while along the misty precipices, the eagles, undisturbed, are teaching their young to fly. All here to-day is desolation, for hand of man has not tilled the

spot since the terrible night, two hundred years ago, when the valley was swept with fire and sword, and a hundred hearths, the dwellings of its devoted clan, were buried in smoking ruins. Foul lies that dark deed at its perpetrators' door, and its memory remains a blot upon their name.

Gleams of sunshine lie golden on the steep mountain-sides to-day, and the purple heather warms them with its bloom; but a storm was raging through the pass on that awful winter night, and snow lay thick upon the ground, when shriek and musket-shot told that the unsuspecting clansmen were being murdered by their guests—guests, too, who, though soldiers, were their own neighbours and relations. Tottering old men and lisping children were butchered here then to avenge the baulked ambition of a cruel statesman; and heart-broken women, clasping helpless infants to their breasts, fled shrieking from their blood-stained hearths to perish amid the storm.

And the coach with its holiday occupants will drive at a gallop to the head of the glen, and some one will make a jest upon the bard's choice of an abode when Ossian's cave is pointed out, high up in the precipice face. But the heart of

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the young bride will fill with world-old pity as she sees, mouldering among the heather in the valley, the ruins of once happy homes; and when the coach comes down again there will be tears perhaps in her eyes as she gazes at the chief's house, and is told how the rude soldiers, after shooting her brave old lord before her eyes, tore the gold wedding-ring with their teeth from the finger of MacIan's wife, and thrust her out, trembling with age and grief, to die of her agony in the snow. For on the loch-shore at the entrance to the glen, the house of the chief stands yet, silent, haunted by its memories, amid the trees—

> Where Sorrow broods in silence evermore
> Among the shadows of eternal hills,
> While at her feet sobs the unceasing sea.

ACROSS BUTE.

TEA is over—the large eggs, snowy scones, and home-made cheese that loaded the table half an hour ago, have been satisfactorily demolished; the full-bodied brown teapot has yielded its final drop, and the crofter's warm-hearted wife is at last assured that her hospitality has received ample justice. It is time to go, for there is a nine miles' tramp across the island yet to be done.

Wait a little! The good woman and her husband will see us to the hill by a short path through their fields. She will "just put a peat on the fire first."

Sweet the air is in the doorway, and peaceful is the hour! The sun is just setting beyond the Cantyre hills, and out there, over the water, the lonely peaks of Arran are purple in the evening light. Scarcely a cloud lingers in the clear green sky, and the calm sea stirs but at intervals with the incoming of the tide. The tan-brown sails of

the fishing-boats that came out of Loch Ranza an hour ago have hardly moved a mile yet up Kilbrannan Sound. The rooks have gone home to the Mount Stuart woods; the whirr of the reaping-machine in the cornfield over there has ceased; all the air is still. The grey smoke rising from thatched roofs here and there in the little strath tells that the evening meal is being prepared. Presently the darkness will come down, and the simple crofter hamlet by the shore will sink to rest. And the weary and the disappointed, soiled with the dust of the far-off city, striving all their lives after what they will never win, have forgotten that sweet bread may be earned on the cornlands, and fair fish caught in the sea; that there is music for listening, here by the murmuring brooks, and rest in the setting of the sun.

Soft shadows are gathering in the hollows of the hills, and the road rising inland through the quiet moors shows its white winding line among the heather. This wandering by-path, too, among the fields, is pleasant. Fitches are flowering yet, purple and yellow, in the hedges, as well as the delicate harebell—bluebell of Scotland—on the bank below. The wild poppies have mostly seeded now, but here and there a spot of flame

tells where a late bloom lingers. Among the feathery grasses in this untouched corner of the field rich heads of the pink clover are still to be seen, and creamy tufted clouds of meadowsweet rise on their dark stems. Above, amid the prickly sprays of wild brier, the glossy hips are already a bright yellow, and on the uncut branches of the thorn clustering bunches of haws are becoming brown. Along the straight "rigs" of the corn-field here, where the crofter was shearing to-day, the dusky stooks of oaks stand in long rows. The good man casts a pleased glance along their lines, for the straw is long this year, and the heads are heavy. There is a quiet satisfaction in the completion of a day's work among the fields which never comes to the mere mercantile toiler. The ploughman strolls forth at night to gaze at the broad acres he has furrowed, and the eye of the reaper is rewarded with fair stooks of winnowing grain.

Healthy as could be the crofter's children look as they pick their way with bare feet along the grassy edge of the stubble-field. No one need wonder that their cheeks and legs are so chubby and brown; for they get their school holidays in harvest-time, and have been helping their father,

all day long, to bind his sheaves. Both boy and girl have caught the clear blue of heaven in their eyes; and the straying locks of their bonnetless hair are just the yellow colour of the corn. Donald, here, will make a sturdy ploughman some day; and that wild Lizzie will soon be a strapping lass. Theirs are the free air of the mountain, the lusty bowl of porridge, and thick broth of stalwart kale.

The road lies close beyond this plantation. But, take care! the ground is boggy here, and one may sink over the boot-head in the soft peat. Step on the hussocks of grass, though, and the footing will be firm enough. In the late light, the higher branches of the pines up there among their dark green foliage shine as red as copper: it is the colour of the rich new bark. Not a blade of grass springs beneath the firs, and the floor of the wood, with its carpet of brown fallen needles, is soft and dry under foot. Only the green feathery fronds of solitary bracken rise here and there in the spaces.

The wood ends at the road, and our little friendly escort need come no farther. A hearty handshake from the crofter, a kindly God-speed from his wife, a laugh and retreat by Lizzie at

suggestion of a kiss, and, as we scale the mossy dyke, they turn back among the trees. A comfortable, contented couple these are, rearing children that will be healthy and strong as themselves. After all, is not this the existence that best fulfils life's real ends? As he cares for the patient beast, and reaps the autumn corn, a man need not be told to glorify God; and here, under sunshine and starshine, where the fruitful earth smells fresh with the rainfall and the dew, he cannot help enjoying Him.

The winding lines of telegraph-poles that mark the road can be seen stretching away for miles among the hills. The sun has set now, and night, falling earlier in the late autumn, is coming down. It is the gloaming hour. Out of the grass-field here by the roadside the trailing-footed kine, with patient eyes and deep udders, are turning down the hill towards their byre. Their satisfied breathing fills the air as they pass with the warm sweet scent of clover. The red-cheeked farm-lass fastens the gate-hurdle to its post when the last beast has gone, and slowly follows homewards. A comely lass she is, with eyes like the sloe, and teeth like milk, and doubtless her sweetheart knows she has a soft voice and a

dewy lip. This is the traditional courting-time in the country—

> 'Tween the gloaming and the mirk,
> When the kye comes hame.

Not another creature is to be seen on the upland road; only, now and again, the lonely cry of the curlew can still be heard far off upon the moor. The last field is passed, and the last shieling lies behind in the valley. The air up here is full of the honey-scent of the heather. The last belated bee, however, hummed homewards half an hour ago.

The summit of the climb at last! Look! Down there on the left, dark and silent under the hills, lies Loch Fad, with, on the far edge of it, a glimmer of silver, the reflection of the full-orbed moon. Could the birth of Aphrodite be fairer, as she rose from the soft sea of the south? Hark! too, there is the sound of lingering footfalls on the road in front, and the murmur of a deep voice. The voice suddenly ceases, and two figures linked together drift past in the dusk. Just a glimpse of shy, happy eyes can be seen—a glimpse worth remembering—and the outline of a modest face. It is the old, old story. The lovely Pagan goddess of the far Ægæan

has worshippers yet among these simple-hearted people of the hills. Happy rustic dreamers!—gamekeeper's lad and gardener's lass, maybe. Sweet is their courting-place and courting-time, with the deep woods to listen to their whispers, and the stars to look down in kindly sympathy. Other lovers there are, alas! whose feet do not tread among the blue forget-me-nots, and for whom no blackbird warbles the vesper song.

Civilisation, however, is approaching, and cultivated fields begin to occupy the strath. A snipe, beating about in the darkness, has alarmed the birds here; peeweets are startling the night with their untimely cries, and their white breasts ever and anon glance by the roadside. Was that faint sound the first bell of the steamer? There is little time to linger. Close below, however, shine the clustered lights of Rothesay; presently the bright fire-points of the yachts at anchor in the bay appear; the old chapel and its graveyard of stones mouldering within their wall is passed —a somewhat eerie place under these dark trees by the roadside;—then, half-way among the quaint houses of the old town, with their jutting gables, the ancient castle—grey, silent, moated—where old King Robert III. died of grief at the

news that his son James had been taken by the English. With threatening clamour the second bell rings up from the steamer, and, with a wild rush down through the newer town and across the fashionable esplanade amid the dazzling lights and fair promenaders of a seaside resort, there is only time to reach the pier and get on board before the last bell rings and the moorings are thrown off.

WITH A CAST OF FLIES.

"GET up, man; get up! Look at the morning! What glorious sunshine! What mists rising on the loch!"

And, indeed, the fresh morning air through the open window, and the flood of rich sunlight falling on the opposite wall of the room, are enough to dispel all lingering drowsiness. Up, then, for a refreshing plunge in the deepest pool of the river, breasting the brown depths with the exulting strength that is born of the air of the mountain, and casting up, with waves of the sweet murmuring waters, a high-tide mark on the white stones that are hot already with the sunshine! Up, for a stroll before breakfast along the warm Highland road; to hear the cuckoo calling across the valley, and, at the door of the byre, the sighing of the patient kine and the soft plash-plashing of the milk in the milking-pails! Cool yet is the air of the corrie as it comes from the waterfall, and all the

mountain-side is musical with the far-off call of the grouse. Under the rich-leaved plane-trees there is the hum of bees at the green hanging blossoms, and from the meadows by the river drift the bleatings of a thousand lambs. Appetite comes here keen as a knife if one but stands a moment on the sunny doorstep, and the morning meal is enjoyed with a whole-hearted zest that brooks no scantiness. Indeed, if there be healing power anywhere on earth for the wasted body or the sorrowing soul, it is to be found here among the hills. Who can long be sick at heart with that glory of valley and sky about him? and who frail of step with his nostrils full of the clover-scent and his tread on the springing heather?

The newspapers have to be got at the morning train; and it is curious to see how the jaded folk who have been travelling all night in the close carriages from the far south open wide the windows to let in the mountain air, and begin to revive like flowers that have just been watered. Enviously they look at the sunburnt schoolboys, who have come panting along the line, and whose faces compare all too well with their own pale features.

The letters, too, have to be waited for at the village post-office. It is universal supply-shop for the country-side as well, so other business can be transacted while Her Majesty's mails, a very small parcel indeed, are being sorted out. Then —for there is nothing needing attention in the correspondence—away for the loch side! It is too fine a day to waste at the displenishing sale up country, though gig after gig has passed, carrying thither farmers on the lookout for bargains. A fair breeze has sprung up, and a cloud or two are moving across the blue, so there is the chance of a fair day's sport with the fly. Bring, then, the rods, and put some provender in the basket, for there will be no coming home for dinner if the trout be taking.

The pleasantest road to the loch will be the path along the mountain-side, and old John M'Gregor can be requisitioned as boatman, by the way. Yonder he is, under the flowering gean-tree, mending his garden wicket. An easy, comfortable life the old man lives, with his many-wrinkled, bright-eyed old wife, on their "wee bit bield and heathery moor." In that snug, thatched little cot they have reared a stalwart brood—sons whose strong hands are tilling their

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own broad acres in the West, and daughters in southern lands, about whose knees are springing, sturdy as seedling oaks, the true materials for future nations. But old John and his wife will be beholden to none of them yet, and when his little croft has been planted for the summer and his peats cast on the moor, when the cow has been turned out to the hill in the morning and the calf tethered in the narrow paddock, he is always ready to take an oar on the loch. His broad-eaved Balmoral bonnet and his rough homespun coat are green with long years of sun and rain; but the head and heart below them keep hale as ever. He is full of anecdotes about the last laird and his feats with the salmon-rod, and it takes a long day of wind on the water to tire his arm when the trout are rising.

Quick, though! There is a cloud just now before the sun, and a fish or two may be got while the shadow is on the loch. It was a mistake to coil up the fly-casts in the tackle-book, for the gut will take some wetting to straighten it out again. It is better to keep the flies round your hat. There, push the boat off; the water is fairly alive with leaping minnows

in the shallow bays, and if the bigger fish be only as eager there will be plenty of sport. Try a cast or two first across the burn mouth; a good chance of something lies there, for the trout wait in the running water to seize any food the stream may bring down. The boat can drift broadside to the wind, so that it is possible to fish both from bow and stern. Bring your line well up behind, and then with a turn of the wrist use the switch of the rod to send the cast out, fair and straight and light, before you. Take care, though; do not begin to work the line before the last fly has touched the surface. The day could not be better, with that ripple on the water, the wind behind, and the sun in front. Hardly an effort is needed to send the line out, and it is possible to put the tail-fly on the very spot where a trout has risen. See! here is a little fellow. What a splashing he makes as the line draws him up to the boat! The spring of the rod itself will lift him over the gunwale. There! you have another; a char, by his sides of gleaming silver and copper.

Whirr! Ah! here is a fellow worth catching; two pounds at least, by the weight on the rod. How the singing of the reel as he makes off

gladdens the heart! There he leaps, for the third time; he is off with a rush, firmly hooked, surely. "Haud up ye're p'int!" shouts John in a terrific whisper. "It's awa' below the boat! Ye'll lose't; an' we're clean a'most—the boat's a' but clean!" It is an exciting moment; but the hooks have not fouled the boat, and the fish's freshness is spent. Slowly he is drawn in, showing the white of his sides. Now with the landing-net; There! he is safe on board—"A gey guid fish," according to the cautious critic. Then comes the inevitable story. The old man "minds ae nicht" here at the burn mouth. There was a party of three. It was a fine night, but dark, and they kindled a fire, when, whether owing to the light or not, they got a great basket of "as fine trouts as ye'll see."

But the sun has come out again, and, as the ripple is not very strong on the water, there is no great chance of doing much with the fly for some time. Something might be done with the minnow, however; so it can be let out with a long line and trailed down the loch.

Down the loch! By the little shingly bays where the swan is preening her plumage on the margin, while her lord floats near, admiring;

where the keen-winged little sand-martins are skimming bank and water, and the quack of wild duck is to be heard among the reeds; past the lonely farm, with its weather-stained roof, at the foot of its own wild glen—a place for life to linger and grow sweet and gather memories, a place for the growth of strong love or deep hate; and under the black crag that rises a thousand feet sheer against the sky, making a mile of cool darkness with its shadow amid the hot sunshine of the loch:—it is like the fabled Voyage of Maeldune. Then there will be the return in the evening, when the sun has set, and the clouds roof the valley as with rust of gold; up the silent strath as the mountains grow dark, and, under the shadow of Ben Shian, the still river, like a pale-green thread, reflects its own clear space of tranquil sky; to the quiet village where there will be supper by lamplight, and the recounting to interested listeners the day's exploits.

FROM A FIELD-GATE.

A GLORIOUS afternoon it is, the hottest of midsummer, with not a shadow in the dazzling blue of the heavens. Who could sit at a desk, with the white butterflies flickering in and out at the open window, the sweet breath of the clove-pinks filling the air, and the faint gurgle of the river coming up from the glen below? The gardener has long ago left off weeding the lawn borders, and betaken himself to the cool planting-house; Jug the spaniel lies panting out there, with lolling tongue, in the shadow under the rhododendrons; and the leaves of the aspens themselves seem tremulous with the heat. It will be pleasanter to go up through the wood to the end of the lane, to sit under the edge of the trees there on the trunk of silver birch that serves for a cattle-gate, and enjoy something of the southern *dolce far niente*, with a pocket copy of gentle Allan Ramsay to finger through.

Altogether quiet the spot is, with the wood behind, and the flowery fields sloping away in front. Not a murmur comes here from the city, whose smoke rises, a murky cloud, far off in the valley below. The streets there will be stifling to-day amid the hot reekings of asphalt pavements, the sifting particles of burning dust, and the incessant roar of traffic. Here, above the fields, the air is sweet with the scent of clover; the stillness is only broken by the faint pipe of a yellowhammer sometimes in the depth of the wood; and the blue heavens shed their peace upon the heart. Nothing but the faintest breath of air is moving, just enough to stir gently the deep grasses of the hayfield, and to touch cheek and lip now and again with the soft warm sigh of the sweetbrier in the hedge. Gleaming flies, green and yellow, with gauzy wings, float like jewels in the sunshine; a shadow for a moment touches the page as a stray rook drifts silently overhead; and on the edge of the great yellow daisy that flames over there like a topaz among the corn, a blue butterfly lazily opens and shuts its wings.

This is the silent month, they say, because the birds have nested and foregone the twitter-

ings of their courting-time; but from the lark up aloft, a quivering black speck in the sky, there is falling a perfect rill of melody. What is he exulting about, the little black speck? Is it for sheer gladsomeness in the happy sunshine, or is it because there is a little helpless brood of callow laverocks in a nest somewhere below among the clover? Glad little heart! sing thy song out while the blue sky smiles above thee. Thou hast forgotten the pinching of the winter cold, and why should thy rapturous hour be saddened by taking thought for the dark things of the morrow. Under the hedge close by, an occasional rustle of dry leaves and an admonitory cluck betray a brood of chickens surreptitiously brought into existence by some lawless and absconding hen; and on a twig a little way off, a young sparrow with fluttering wings gapes its yellow beak for the attentions of a proud and sprightly parent.

In the distance, from the bottom of the next meadow, comes the faint whir of a mowing-machine. It and the reapers are out of sight; but on the level beyond, the ryegrass lies in long white lines winnowing in the sun. Well may that harvest be the first to be gathered,

for it is the share that falls to the faithful dumb friends of man. Meanwhile, the farm horses left at liberty in the grass-field at hand are evidently, like many honest souls of another genus who have worked hard all their lives, quite at a loss what to do with their late-acquired leisure.

On the dyke-top here, the clover, with great ball-blooms of rich pink, is growing beside the purple-toothed vetch and the small yellow stars of another unknown flower. In the hedge, among the heavy-scented privet blossoms, are flowers of pink wild-rose delicate as the bloom of a girl's cheek, with full pouting buds red as lips that would be kissed. White brier-roses there are, too, as large as crown pieces; and great velvety humble-bees are busy botanising among their stamens. The bees prefer the newly opened ones, however, whose hearts are still a rich golden yellow. Below, among the woodland grasses, the white dome-clusters of the dim-leaved yarrow are flowering amid a miniature forest of green mare's-tails and the downy stalks of hemlock. Gardeners are only now beginning to see the beauty of the yarrow for deep borders, as they are beginning to see the beauty of the foxglove and the glory of the broom. Over

there in the side of the wood-ditch are springing delicate tufts of spleenwort; and already the flower-fronds of the hard-fern are rising from the nest of their dark-spread fellows. The graceful heart-shaped nettle leaf appears there too, with its purple stem, beside the tall magenta-coloured flowers of the bastard-thistle.

A pleasant retreat, indeed, is the spot; and through the tangled wood-depth, of a moonlight night, might be expected to come the revel court of Titania. Is not that one of her furry steeds, with velvet ears erect and bright wide eyes, cropping the green blade in the grassy lane path? Her sleek chorister, too, the blackbird, has forgotten to be timid as he hops across the ruts there, waiting doubtless for her coming. Whirr! What a rush of wings! It is a flight of starlings disturbed from the grass-field below; for these birds bring their young out to the fields this month in flocks of hundreds to feed. Round and round they wheel in the air, as if delighting in their power of wing, before finally settling on the grassy knoll a hundred yards away.

A sunny knoll that is, where the birds feed undisturbed to-day—a small point in the land-

scape; yet it has a page of history to itself. On its summit once stood a Scottish queen, surrounded by a little group of nobles, watching, a mile to the north, the die of her fate being cast, the arbiter of life or death. Two armies lay before her. Far off about the little village in the bosom of yonder hill she saw two dark masses gathered, with a battery line of guns between them. Those were her enemies; and one of the horsemen behind them—it was only a mile away—she knew was her own half-brother. Nearer, on the lower rising ground, which the railway cuts through now, she saw her own troops gathering, a larger force, but without the advantage of position. And the queen watched and waited; it was about nine o'clock of the morning. Presently, a cloud of smoke sprang out between the armies, and immediately was heard the roar of cannon. The duel of the artillery had begun. During half an hour little could be seen for the smoke, and there was a constant explosion of ordnance. It must have been an anxious time. Suddenly, however, the firing ceased, the smoke rolled away, and the battlefield could be made out. The queen's cavalry had formed into line, had charged, and were driving the enemy's horse

before them. Then a tear sprang to the queen's eye as she saw her vanguard leave the hill, cross the open ground among the furze, and, with their gallant leader at their head, rush to storm the village. They disappeared in the narrow lane, where the new church stands now in the hollow of the hill, and there could only be heard faintly their shout as they closed with their opponents, and the shot-reports of the enemy's hagbutters firing at them from the hedge-gardens and the village roofs. How was the day going? See! the enemy's wing was wavering, was giving way. Fight on, brave fellows! brave vanguard! press them hard. A few moments longer, and the day is yours.

But look! A horseman gallops to the other wing of the enemy, where the Regent is riding. It stirs: it moves down upon the village. Ah, where now is the queen's reserve. Why does it remain inactive and aloof? Are its rival leaders quarrelling over petty precedence, or is there treachery in its ranks? The battle closes again about the narrow lane. The vanguard is attacked on either flank—it is overborne—it gives way. See! they are broken; they pour back out of the lane. Wounded, weaponless, they are fleeing,

and with a yell their foes are upon them, cutting them down. But the reserve is moving at last; it may bring help; it may yet retrieve the hour. Ah, cowards! it breaks and scatters. The day is lost. Away! then, away, poor hapless queen! Ply whip and spur for thy life. Neither here nor anywhere in all thy fathers' kingdom of Scotland is there safe tarrying-place for thee now. And may Heaven help thee in the hour of need, for thou wilt find small help in man or woman!

The starlings are feeding this afternoon on the Court Knowe, the hillock there, undisturbed; and it is three hundred and twenty-eight years since the stricken queen rode away through the hollow of the hills where the green corn is growing. The suburbs of the city are spreading even over the battlefield itself. But ever and again, upon a summer day, there comes a pilgrim to stand a while in pitying silence on the little knoll under the trees, and to recall something of these "old, unhappy, far-off things," as he reads upon the stone there the royal monogram, and the date, May 13, 1568.

SCHOOL-DAYS.

AS a means of awakening the genial after-dinner humour of most men past middle age, no subject, perhaps, equals the memory of early school-days. Let the topic but be started by an anecdote of some long dead dominie, it is as if the spigot had been drawn from a butt of old vintage, and the stream of recollection will flow forth rich and sparkling with the mellowed light of years. Strange is the charm of a word! For a lifetime a man has been painfully toiling up the Alps of circumstance; it may be he has gained the object of his desire—the glittering ice-crystal on the peak which long ago dazzled his upward-looking eyes; and now, toying with the walnuts and the wine, someone says "I remember:"—lo! the years are forgotten; the greybeard is back in the sunny valley of his boyhood, wandering the field-paths with chubby companions long since dust, and filling his heart once more with the sweet scent

of hayricks, of the hedges in hawthorn-time. It is not for nothing that rustic children day after day, as they start for school, hear the low of the farmyard kine coming in to the milking, and that day after day, as they tread the long miles of moorland path, they see the grouse whirr off to the mountain, and the trout dart away from the sunny shallows; and it is not for nothing that they spend long truant afternoons by ferny lanes and harebell copses in the seasons of bird-nesting and bramble-gathering. These make the fragrant memories of after years! And again and again, in later life, to the man jaded with anxiety and care, the old associations come back, laden with pleasant regrets—a breath from the clover-fields of youth.

School life in town, notwithstanding its more sophisticated surroundings, has also its memories; for in what circumstances will not the boyish mind create a charmed world of its own! Apart from the actual events of class-room and play-ground, the streets and the shop windows, and the things in them to be desired, all furnish absorbing interests; and a half-amused envy in later years attends the memory of the fearful joy with which, after much contriving of ways

and means, and much final screwing-up of courage to face the shopman, the long-coveted percussion pistol, or the wonderful and still more expensive model locomotive, was acquired and smuggled home. But school life in the city has a certain precocity which detracts from the poetry of its remembrance—an aroma is lacking which forms the subtlest charm of the associations of rustic childhood. What has the city-bred man to compare to the memory of that hot afternoon in July, when, escaped from the irksome thrall of desk and rod, in the clear river pool at the bottom of some deep-secluded dingle, the urchins of the rural pedagoguy learned to swim? Such a scene remains in a man's mind, a possession and a "joy for ever." Far off in some city den, gas-lit and fog-begrimed, his eyes may grow dim, poring over ledgers that are not his own, and his heart may grow heavy and sick with hope deferred; but at a word, a suggestion, it will all come back; he will be standing again on that grassy margin, the joyous voices of his comrades will be ringing in his ears, while the sunshine once more beats warmly on his head, and at his feet sparkle over their sandy bottom the pellucid waters of the woodland pool.

The black art of letters is probably the least detail of the learning acquired by school-children in the country, and it must be confessed that the thirst for book-lore is not exactly their most conspicuous foible. Happy, nevertheless, in "schools and schoolmasters" of Nature's own appointing, they grow up like the lilies, children of the earth and sun, and none the less fit for life, perhaps, that their learning has been got at first-hand from the facts and realities of actual existence. Who has not envied the bright-eyed boys and red-lipped little lasses, healthy with the breath of the woods and of the fresh-delved earth, whom one meets, satchel on back, on sequestered country roads? The dead tongues may be dead, indeed, to them, and mathematics an unnamed mystery; but, with eyes and ears open, they have learned all the lore of the fields and the hedges—have drunk deep at those nature-fountains whence all the literatures and poetries of the world have sprung.

Many changes have been made in school-teaching in the country of recent years. The Government inspector is now abroad, and code and standard compel all within their iron rule. The old ruts and byways have been forsaken, and

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the coach of Learning has been made to roll, if not yet along the coveted "royal road" of the old saw, at least along a highway more uniformly paved than of yore. The difference in outside appearance between the wayside school-houses of to-day and of thirty years ago is only an indication of the changes which have taken place within. The days are past when any incompetent would do for a dominie; and in place of the halt and the palsied, who used to fill the pedagogic chair, there is now the pretty school-ma'am from some Normal seminary. A tyrant of the most petty kind, it is to be feared, the rural schoolmaster of the old days too often was—

> Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
> The day's disasters in his morning face;
> Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
> At all his jokes, for many a joke had he:
> Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
> Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned.

Now all this is altered. No longer would it be suffered that a sour and crabbed dominie, too crippled to walk, should, out of sheer caprice and ill-temper, hurl his tawse at some urchin's head, and order him to bring them up and be thrashed;

and it is to be doubted if the modern "Board" would countenance even such a gallant device as the vicarious birching of a boy for the delinquencies of one of the dearer sex. Idiosyncrasies like these, no doubt, made much of the picturesqueness of school life in the country a generation ago; and people whose memories are of the old régime are apt to look back upon the former state of things, faulty as it was, with a sigh. Sometimes a head is shaken regretfully, and it is averred that with modern innovations are being planed away all those strong, rich peculiarities of ancient rural life which made character in the country interesting. The crabbed rule of the ancient village pedagogue has a charm for those who have escaped beyond reach of his tawse, the thrashings themselves of bygone days have become mere subject for a smile. Point of view, however, makes a considerable difference in the matter, and the unfortunate urchin of those days, counting the strokes of an ill-tempered and unreasoning castigation upon his nether habiliments, probably entertained a somewhat different sentiment.

Head-shakings and misgivings notwithstanding, individuality of country life may very well be

left to take care of itself. Children remain true to their instincts under the new régime as under the old; and growing like the trees of the hedgerows, amid the influences of wild and varied nature, rustic character may still be trusted to develop a picturesqueness of its own. The real country school, after all, does not lie within four walls, nor is it ruled by the rod of prim school-ma'am or spectacled dominie. Nature herself, the primeval *alma mater* of all mankind, is the educator there. The leaves of her primers are stored in the woodlands; her history-books are written and explained by the seasons themselves; the lark and the rivulet are the perpetual tutors of her "old notation"; and her terms are timed by the bloom and flight of the snowdrop and the swallow.

A LOCH-SIDE STRATH.

HARDLY more than twenty miles from the populous heart of Glasgow lies a parish of which no notice is to be found in the guide-books. No show-place is supposed to be there, and no tourist route runs through it, and so, though almost within hearing of the hum of a great city, the strip of country between mountain and loch remains all but as primitive in its rustic simplicity as it was a hundred years ago. A century ago, indeed, the district may have been better known than it is to-day, if notoriety be regarded as a distinction; for every corrie in the hillsides and every burnside hollow, where a little wooding afforded concealment, appears then to have been the scene of illicit distilling operations; and the raids of the excise and military in search of "sma' stills" were both frequent and famous. With this exception the parish has been allowed to slumber on in happy obscurity since the days of the old clan feuds and

the cattle-liftings of its neighbours, the wild Macgregors.

Nevertheless, unknown though it may be, and unfrequented by "the Sassenach" as in the days of Rob Roy himself, this quiet loch-shore has a history stirring enough, and memories of its own. Situated just on the old Highland line, the district must frequently at all periods have been the scene of warlike episodes. Regarding the tastes and pursuits of its ancient inhabitants there remains small doubt. The memorial of a peaceful enough enterprise, it is true, seems crystallised in the name of the parish—the parish of St Ronan's Cell, as it reads translated. Midway, it is said, on his journey from Kilmarnock in Ayrshire to Kilmaronaig on Loch Etive, that famous missionary priest of the early Church thought it worth his while to tarry a space in the district in order to teach the rude inhabitants peace. But, to judge by the later events of history, the task would seem to have had but doubtful results. The prevailing names, at the present hour, of the people in the district—Galbraith, Macfarlane, M'Kean—recall the circumstances of less orderly times. In the stalwart farmers' sons guiding the plough and feeding the

cattle about the steadings there to-day, one sees the lineal descendants of clansmen who once held their own on the loch-side by the primitive *coir a glaive*—the title of the strong arm. To keep these turbulent vassals in order, the Earls of Lennox found it necessary to hold three castles in the neighbourhood.

Nor has the strath been without a share in the outstanding events of history. This loch-shore it was which witnessed the failure of Argyle's ill-advised attempt at rebellion in 1685. Here, barring his progress, beyond the streamlet in the clachan of the parish, the Protestant Earl, after his long march among the western lochs, first came within sight of the Royal troops. Here, that night, his camp-fires were left burning to deceive his opponents; and it was on the hills behind that his little army finally lost its way, broke up, and dispersed amid the bogs and the darkness.

A romantic story of that most romantic of episodes, the Rebellion of 1745, also belongs to the district. The most powerful family in the strath at that time, as, indeed, it had been for generations, was one of the name Buchanan. This family owned two mansions and estates at

no great distance from each other, and from the larger of these they took their familiar title, Buchanans of the Ross. Whether the head of the house of that date had personally taken part in the Jacobite rising, or had incurred suspicion of Jacobite sympathies, need not be inquired into, but, upon the final overthrow of the Stuart cause in the spring of 1746, it can be understood that he, in common with others in his position, was willing enough to demonstrate his loyalty to the Government of King George. The opportunity for doing so which occurred to him, however, involved a breach of laws which above all others were held inviolably sacred by the Highlanders—the laws of hospitality.

The tradition of the district has to be relied upon for the story. By this tradition it would appear that among the fugitives upon whose head a price was set, after Culloden, was the Marquis of Tullibardine, elder brother of the Duke of Athole. Being hard pressed by the search-parties which were everywhere scouring the country, this nobleman, it is said, betook himself to Buchanan of the Ross, with whom he had been upon terms of friendship, and besought temporary asylum. This favour Buchanan granted readily enough, and

apparently in all good faith; but no sooner was the unfortunate refugee secure under his roof than he intimated the fact to the nearest military post. The natural consequence was an immediate visit of the soldiery and the arrest of the fugitive.

Here the story becomes uncanny. The victim of misplaced confidence was being dragged across the threshold, when, it is said, recovering from surprise at the unheard-of treachery, his Highland rage and indignation reached the blazing point, and, turning upon his host, he hurled out the imprecation, "There'll be Murrays on the braes of Athole when there's ne'er a Buchanan at the Ross!"

This was the last of the Marquis, so far as the district was concerned, but it was by no means, in the eyes of the dwellers there, the last of his "curse." Strangely enough, and, whether in fulfilment of the fierce prophecy or not, only a few decades had passed when the race at the Ross, so far as the male line was concerned, actually died out, and, as if to complete the result, upon two occasions since then the estates have passed to other hands through female heirs.

In the early decades of the present century the

master of the place was an Edinburgh advocate, Mr Hector Macdonald, and under his hospitable roof again and again was entertained no less a guest than the author of "Waverley." It is not difficult to understand, apart from the congenial society of his host, Scott's attraction to the house. The natural beauty of the place, if nothing else, must have been a continual delight to one so keenly alive as he was to the interest of woodland and loch. The district around, the house itself, and the mountains before him, besides, were teeming with memories—every glen the home of a romance. In Ross Priory, at anyrate, he frequently stayed, and from the local legends and colour with which his residence supplied him he selected the materials for some of the most famous episodes in "Rob Roy" and "The Lady of the Lake." The use he made of it, indeed, has invested the whole district with a new interest. All the neighbourhood, strath and glen, glows with the reflected splendour of his thought, a "light that never was on sea or land"; and with the clear wind blowing fresh from mountain and loch, something seems mingled of the wholesome mental health and vigour of the "Wizard's" work.

The place has changed but little since Scott last visited it, and the wanderer by the loch's margin may, with the atmosphere of the past still about him, indulge in all the pleasures of reverie and recollection undisturbed. At the present day hardly a sound is to be heard there but the lapse of wavelets on the pebbly beach, and the sighing of the wind through the branches of the immemorial oaks. Occasionally, on a summer evening, when the air is still, the far-off beat of paddles comes faintly across the lake, as the steamer threads its passage among the islands. But for the rest of the time the call sometimes of the peacocks on the lawn before a storm, and, at night, the harsh cry of wild-fowl making flight for the marshes at the river's mouth, form the only addition to the harmony of the wind and the waters.

A HIGHLAND REEL.

MUCH study, truly, becomes a weariness of the flesh. After a long day's seclusion over desk and books the cobwebs begin to gather about one's brain, and stronger and stronger grows the longing to look upon the face of one's fellows. There are fair faces, too, to look upon, and bright-lipped laughter to listen to not far away; and the shriek of a fiddle or the skirl of the pipes is all that is needed to set light footsteps tripping on a broad barn floor. Down with pamphlet and pen, therefore; on with a heavy coat in case of rain, and out into the roaring night.

A heavy "carry" is tearing across the sky, but the air is fresh and clear; and see, away below through the darkness, by the loch-side, shining hospitable and bright, are the lights of Gartachraggan. Away, then, by the steading, where the patient beasts are stirring in their byres, and a breath is caught of the rich warm mash

preparing for their evening meal. Away through the whin-haughs, where the owls answer each other with silvery hootings, and again and again overhead there is heard the creaking wing of belated snipe beating to and fro. How the wind sighs in the naked hedges, with a louder whisper where the thick-leaved holly-trees are set! One is tempted to linger under the soft shelter of the wood, where the air is rich with the fragrance of the undergrowth, and the stillness gives a feeling of pleasant security by contrast with the roar and sough of the storm in the tree-tops far above. The stones of the dry-dyke here are covered close with the clinging tendrils of a small-leaved ivy, and wild strawberry and wild geranium in summer star with white and pink the mossy crannies. A pleasant spot it is, therefore, at that time of year, to linger in, to watch the red squirrel frolic on the road, and the chaffinch build his mossy home overhead. But to-night one's thoughts are otherwise. It is cold, and the south wind is roaring in the wood, hustling the withered leaves to limbo. Down the hill, therefore, at a blithesome pace, jousting and jesting with the storm, till a glimpse of the realm of Oberon is caught below—the foam-swept loch with its lonely islets, seen by the fitful

gleam of stars. Life comes back to the jaded heart on such a night, as the fresh wind lifts the hair and clears the brain. There is war in the heavens overhead, and the scream can be heard of wild-duck entangled in the driving clouds; but in the heart there is only laughter, born of the comradeship of "rude Boreas." Whew! Draw in here to the shelter till the rain-blast sweeps over. It whistles like arrowy sleet through the branches overhead, and the great limbs roar and struggle in the contest. The bole of the giant ash itself heaves and groans with the effort. But the strong tree has grappled before with the Titan, and the wrestlings of eighty winters have but given it a deeper grip of the soil. And so the blast blows over, the air clears, and close at hand, a ruddy blaze among the trees, are seen the gleaming windows of the farm.

What a kindly welcome is this! No ordinary "How d'ye do?" and touch of listless fingers, but a heartiness honest as its own broad vowels. The good folk here live close to the soil, and continually touch the real facts of life. Ennui and cynicism, those soul-cankers of the dwellers in towns, have never found their way to these homesteads by the loch-side; and sweet and

whole-hearted as the breath of their own hay-ricks are the greetings of these hospitable folk. For the frank grasp that will ease world-cares, go to the kindly sea-captain, or the hand that has held a plough. Years have gathered on the heads of the farmer and his wife since first their ploughshares turned the loch-side soil, but still they are fresh and hale, and the frost of years that has silvered their hair has touched them no whit besides. Meanwhile, there has grown around them a brave and comely brood—sons stalwart as the ark-builders of old, and daughters—ah! Look not too long upon these, good youth, or thou art undone (though that might not be the worst thing that could happen thee). For there is choice and difference among them; the hair of one dark as the starling's wing, another's bright with russet gold; eyes blue as the summer skies, eyes dark as the woodland wells; cheeks of fair soft peach-bloom, and cherry lips ripe and red. Beware!

Into the parlour? No!—the kitchen is the place. A carpeted parlour can be seen at any time, but such a kitchen only in such a spot. The great fire blazing in the chimney roars defiance to the storm outside, and flashes its

warm light upon wall and rafter. Lamps shine bright as silver in their sconces, and plate-racks and harness steels gleam in the wall's recesses. Not a speck stains the purity of the red-stone floor, and the massy tables and chairs of honest deal are white as driven snow. Into the kitchen, then, and ask for the goodman's health, and whether the ploughing has gone forward well, whether the collie that went amissing has turned up yet, and what was done with the tramp who threatened the ploughman's wife.

But, listen! the neighbours are coming already, and in the lull of the wind surely that was the sound of the pipes! How the girls' eyes sparkle and their colour rises! What tempting access of witchery!—wait a little, take care, keep hold of your heart! Perhaps their sweethearts are coming. The pipes stop at the door, there is a sound of laughter, a moment's pause, and then a new invasion of brave lads and comely lasses, bringing in with them the earth-smelling wind of the night. Fresh-voiced as the spring thrushes, it is an inspiration to look at and listen to these sons and daughters of the hills.

First of all, for the Highlands are hospitable, something must be eaten. The table in a trice

is heaped with tempting array—everything the produce of the farm itself, and not the less delicious for the fair hands that have placed it there.

Then, hey, presto! the scene is changed. A space has been cleared in the barn, and lamps hung from the rafters and on the walls light it up in gipsy fashion, casting fantastic shadows into the far corners behind the great heaps of warm oat-straw. A skirl of the pipes, and in a moment partners are chosen. Then more than one secret slips out to the curious eye; for much there is to be read in the language of a blush and a look. The lads stand back to back, two and two, their partners facing them, and as the music takes to the air, featly they trip it in the merry figure-of-eight. Presently, opposite their neighbours' partners, comes the chance for spirit and agility, and many a wild capering step is done by the lads with arm in air and a whirl of the tartans, while the lasses, more modest, with downcast look, hold back their skirts daintily as they foot it with toe and heel. Faster and faster the music gathers, faster flies the dance with its changing step, with the threading of eights and the Highland fling, while cheeks take

flame, eyes flash wildly, and the barn floor shakes in rhythm. More and more breathless grow lasses and lads, but no one will yield to stop, till at last, with a wild whoop, they fling themselves all at once upon the straw, and the music slowly runs out.

Again and again it will be renewed, with the wilder "Reel o' Hulochan" for a change, or some wonderful old-fashioned country dance; and only some time in the morning, long after the old folk have gone to bed, will the merry party break up, tired but delighted, to go home in twos and threes along the hills.

AN ARRAN RIDE.

"HAMISH will just be putting the mare in the cart to drive over the ladies, so the need is not so great for hurrying."

The arrangement of the crofter's wife is hospitably meant, if somewhat ominously expressed. Conveyance of any kind, moreover, will be most acceptable to the two ladies of our party after their long ramble on seashore and moorland; and the more primitive it prove, the more fittingly will it end the memories of the day. "Meanwhile 'the need is not so great for hurrying,'" repeats one of the two slyly, out of hearing of her hostess, and, pulling off her gloves, proceeds to gather pleasure from the blazing chimneyful of peat. Leaning back in the warm light, she stirs the white feathery ash with a dainty boot, and discovers, to the boot's cost and her own surprise, that the whiteness of the peat conceals a glow of burning red. It is a peculiarity of the Highland character, as of the Highland fuel,

this fire within the grey exterior, needing only a touch or a breath to show itself.

The light ash of the peat, they say, flies everywhere about a shieling. But it is a cleanly thing. It leaves no tarnish, at anyrate, on the snowy wood dresser or its high rack of shining delf. The tall old-fashioned mahogany case-clock in the corner, an heirloom much valued, may have absorbed more of the powder, perhaps, than conduces to regular intestinal working; but the open iron cruizie or cresset lamp hanging quaintly, though now unused, from the high mantelshelf, is kept clear enough for lighting yet if need were; and maybe the hams and "kippered" fish hanging from hooks in the blackened rafters are rather improved in flavour by the condiment.

But look here. With true Highland hospitality, preparations for tea have been surreptitiously advanced, and the fresh, wholesome-looking daughter of the house and her mother lift into the middle of the earthen floor the table ready caparisoned with cloth-of-snow, glittering cups and knives, heaped sugar-bowl, and beaker of rich yellow cream. A lissome flower of the moors is this crofter maid. The oatmeal which

she has been baking is not more soft and fair than the skin of the comely lass, and, as she smiles reply in lifting the toasted oat-farles from the flat iron "girdle" swung over the fire, it needs no poet to notice that her eyes are bits of summer sea and her mouth a damask bud. The toasted farles of oat-cake from her hand send forth an ambrosial smell which, with the fragrance of the new-made tea, is irresistible to hungry folk, and no pressing Highland exhortation is needed to set visitors of both sexes to the attack of the viands.

Not till every one has again and again declared sheer inability to pursue the attack further, does the announcement come that "the mare is in the cart." A chair, therefore, is presently carried out, and the whole party of four mount into the rough vehicle among the straw. Hereupon follow a hand-shaking and repetition of hospitable invitations to return which begin to become almost embarrassing, before Hamish starts at his horse's head upon the moor track.

A long, memorable day it has been, amid the warm sunshine and the bright sea-breeze, a day to do the heart good and to tire the limbs

royally—the morning draught of brave mountain air and life on the white moorland road before the inn; the forenoon ramble, rod in hand, on the warm gorse-path by the river; luncheon in quaint-flavoured, wit-haunted company by the blue Kilbrannan Sound, with nothing to interrupt but the beat of sudden outflying wings sometimes about the warm cliff crannies overhead, and, on the beach below, the soft caressing murmur of the secret-telling sea; the afternoon drive to the far hill-clachan, where the turf roofs were tied down with heather ropes, where the brown women were carrying sea-wrack to manure their fields, and where, as a back-sound to the quaint-turned Highland speech, was heard the thud-thud of the swinging flails; and, last of all, the return at evening by the high moorland path, with the amethyst fire dying out on Ben Ghoil in the east, and, in the west, the sunset heavens aflame with saffron and rose, and the sea a living splendour of generous wine.

Now it is night, and the air comes cooler over the moor. No air is like Arran air at night, with its vague herb-perfumes adrift, for stirring old memories and desires in the heart and new ambitions in the blood. Upon its clear breath

old designs, old possibilities long forgotten, come back again to make life and hope. By it the vapours of worldly wisdom are blown aside, the cloud-wrack care of intervening years is lifted, and one walks again clear-hearted for a time in the April valley of his youth. Night anywhere has charms for those who think, but night upon the moors possesses an influence peculiarly its own. The primeval heath, wild and undesecrated by the hand of man, lies under "the splendid-mooned and jewelled night," shadowy and mystic with the silence of the ages. Abroad upon the moor at such an hour seem to brood the imaginings of an older world, and the grey stone circles standing gaunt yet upon the Arran wilds are hardly needed to suggest the memory that along these wilds, once upon a time, wound processions of bearded Druids, to practise under the starry influences rites of a faith now long forgotten. At intervals upon the moor appear these grey menhirs and circles. Inscrutable as the Egyptian sphinx they stand with sealed lips, strange monuments of a buried past. For tens of centuries they have seen the dusks gather and the stars swim overhead, but no rising sun has wakened them from their silence, and still they keep the

stony secret of their origin, though they could not keep the ashes of the dead committed to their charge.

Meanwhile Hamish makes way steadily, though by tortuous windings. None but a native bred on the spot could conduct a vehicle safely by night across these moors. Where unaccustomed eyes can make out no sign whatever of a track, and where a single mistake would send one wheel floundering into a peat-hag and the other spinning in the air, or capsize the whole equipage into the miry abysses of a bog, Hamish leads confidently on, with no worse result than the jolting of a rugged road. The mare is a sturdy beast of the small sure-footed Arran breed, now dying out, and she pulls away gallantly among rocks and heath-tufts that would bring any other sort of horse to quick disaster. It takes her master all his time to keep up with her on the rough ground, and he has breath left for no more than an occasional "Ay, ay," or "'Deed, yes, sir!" in the true Arran accent. English is evidently the less familiar language to him; his remarks to the mare, *sotto voce*, are in Gaelic.

All last month after nightfall tufts and sheets of flame were to be seen among the darkness of

the hills; for in March they burn the heather on the sheep-farms to let the young herbage come up, and the conflagrations which appear then as pillars of smoke by day become pillars of fire by night. But in April the moorland birds have begun to build their nests, and the hills are left to them in darkness and in peace. The only light to be seen from the cart is that in the window of the croft far behind, which will be kept aglow by thoughtful hands as a guide till Hamish's return after moonset. Over the brow of the moor, however, the shining lights of the clachan at the mountain foot before long come into sight, and away to the right, tremulous with silver and shadows, the sheen of the moonlight can be made out on the sea. Rapidly now the path descends, plunging presently through lanes of high thorn hedges where the stars are all but shut out overhead. The rush of a river is heard, the wheels grate harshly on the gravel, there is a sudden and vigorous splashing of hoofs, and the mare has passed the ford. Then a half-mile of climb uphill on a good road, and Hamish stands still with his charge at the door of the inn.

BY A WESTERN FIRTH.

"GOOD-BYE, my dear!"

How beautiful the old lady looks as she stands in the porch overclustered with its tangle of budding roses and honeysuckle, a kindly smile on her lips, and her eyes shining, and her silver hair, in the last light of afternoon! For the sun is setting now, across the water, behind the hills of Bute, and the glory that fills the heavens and floods the full-ebbed sea casts about her, in its departing moments, a halo of peace serene as the hours of her life's own afternoon. "Good-bye, my dear!"

Sunshine and silence sleep now on the hillside strath above, where the woods hang motionless, and the sward here and there, in the open spaces, is lit with the golden flame of gorse in blossom; but across that hillside once long ago raged the tide of a relentless war. Here, blood-red in the setting sun, waved the standard of a Scottish king, and yonder, down to the shore and to the

wrecks of his ships, was driven back the shattered strength of the invading Norseman. The corries were filled then with the bodies of the dead, and the brown waters were stained a dreadful purple in the burn-pools where the trout leap now after the evening fly. That was the Scottish Salamis.

No one is in sight upon the white road, and no sound to be heard of distant footstep or departing wheels. There is only the lingering lapse of the quiet ripples as the sea sows its pearl-seed along the shore. A perfect calm rests upon the waters while the light slowly leaves them, and the red sun goes down behind the hills; only, at one place, across the glassy surface, where the tide is stirring, run, on the tiny wavelets, a hundred flickering tongues of fire, and, far out, the reflection of the great yellow cloud aflame in the west shimmers like frosted gold upon the sea.

Gently the gloaming falls. The last mellow pipe of the mavis floats from the garden shrubbery behind, and bats begin to jerk about with their uncertain flight under the trees, their wings making a curious eerie creaking in the air. Only a dim green light falls through the leaves interlaced overhead as the road leaves the bay and dips inland through the woods.

The day's work is over. It is the sacred hour, and, far from "the stir and tumult of the street," in these still aisles, carpeted soft with fallen bud-sheaths and grass, roofed with the fretted canopy of branch and leaf, and hung with the fringed banners of larch and birch, ascends to heaven with the last notes of the woodland choristers the sweet incense of a thousand flowers. Mossy dykes run into the wood-depths here, and among the tall feathery grasses under the trees there are places purple with a mist of wild hyacinths. A crimson shadow, too, lies here and there, where the wood geranium throws its profusion; and pink and white sandflowers grow in the dry ditch-sides. By the clear mossy roadside well, and among the withered leaves in the glades, rise the first green spires of the foxgloves; a golden haze betrays the beds of yellow crowfoot; and in some sequestered spots pale primroses are still starring the rivulet banks.

Amid the woods, a secluded nook, nestles a cottage—the gamekeeper's lodge, with its low slate roof, and sweetbrier trained upon the white walls, yellow pansies asleep beneath its window-sills, and crimson fuchsia and wild dog-roses blossoming in the hedge. The little flower-garden

about it is trimly kept, with its southernwood and thyme, its clipped box edgings and gravelled path; and in the grassy hollow under the wood behind are the rows of boxes for breeding the young pheasants. A faint luscious smell hangs in the air of the spot—suggestive of frying trout freshly caught in the brown burn that gurgles close by in the darkness. The keeper, too, is sitting outside the quiet doorway enjoying his evening pipe; and the fragrance of the southern weed mingles with the sweet scent of the pink hawthorn flowering over the wicket. Tread softly, though, on the grassy edge of the road for a little way. The kennel is at hand, and the slightest sound will set every dog baying his loudest. The rattle of a terrier's chain is enough, sometimes, to set the woods echoing for full ten minutes.

The air grows less heavy as the road again approaches the shore, and there comes up with the murmur of the shingle the faint salt smell of the sea. Away in front the bright blaze streaming out in the darkness strikes from the lighthouse tower at the outmost sea-edge, receiving its signal, like the bale-fires of old, from the beacon on the opposite coast, and flashing

it on to the next point up channel. Far out, too, on the firth a red light is moving, and the faint beat of paddles comes across the water. It is the last river-steamer making for the watering-place opposite. Singularly still the air is, to carry so distinctly the throbbing of that distant pulse. Not another sound is to be heard, and nothing astir is to be seen. Only, the moon has risen, a clear sickle, on the edge of the dark hill above. On such a night loveliness and mystery swim together on the air; the blushing of the rose is the fairer for being but half seen in the dim light; the woods above have ceased their amorous whisperings; and the sea amid the silence is kissing the shore's wet lips.

What white shadow comes yonder, though, moving under the high hedge in the darkness? It might almost be one of those wraiths of which the country-folk speak with bated breath—the awful Something seen moving in the dusk from the house where a man has died. There is a sound of hoofs here, however, and the spectre proves to be but the gaunt Rozinante of some wandering gipsies—the grey and pitiful counterpart, doubtless, of a once-gallant steed.

Delicate hands may have patted the neck worn bare now by the collar, and sweet sugar-bits may have been offered by dainty fingers to the lips that tremble now as they crop the dusty roadside grasses. Does memory ever come to the brain behind those patient eyes?

See! close by in the little dell among the flowering broom twinkles the camp-fire of the owners. Their dark figures lie about it asleep, for the night is warm, and they are a hardy race; while at hand stands their quaint house on wheels, overhung with baskets of all sorts and uses. A strange, lawless life they live in the midst of nineteenth-century civilisation, those Bedouins of the broomfields and commons.

But here is our inn, a long-forgotten hostelrie, where one can sit at noon in the shade by the doorway with a book, and watch the ships far out go by upon the firth, while the cool sea glistens below, and all day long there is the drowsy hum of bees about the yellow tassels of the laburnums at the gable ends. A pleasant spot it is even now in the darkness. The lilac-trees in the garden are a-bloom, and the air is sweet with their scent. A pleasant place, where the comely hostess will welcome the tired

pedestrian, where his supper will taste the better for the fresh night air from the open window, and where, presently, he will fall asleep between sheets that smell of the clover-field, to dream of the firmly-grasped tiller, the snowy cloud of sails overhead, and the rushing of the water under the yacht's counter of the morrow.

AN ISLAND PICNIC.

SEVEN o'clock, and a glorious morning! The sun is shining brightly on the coral-clustered rowan-tree outside, and the sky already is dazzling blue. A gentle air, too, just stirs the muslin curtain of the window left open overnight. With it comes in the scent of honey and the hum of bees at work in the garden below. No morning is this for laziness and a late breakfast. The impulse to be abroad is born of the sunshine; and a few minutes serve, after a hurried toilet, to snatch a towel, bound down stairs, and go tramping across the heather to the well-known pool.

A magnificent day indeed it promises to be. The wreathing night-mists have already risen from the Bens, and the loch below gleams like melted sapphire round sylvan island and far-set promontory. Everywhere the mountains are clad in purple, and from the moor-bloom spreading its springy carpet underfoot rises a fragrance that fills air and heart alike with delight. And

the river pool—never was found more delightful bathing-place. Hidden deep between over-hanging banks of heather in flower, with a clean brown ledge of rock to dive from, the depth of dark, clear water, like amber wine, sparkles with foam-bells, and the waterfall tosses from the rock above great showers of silver spray. No more invigorating plunge could be had. For a moment, as he breasts the brown depths, the bather feels something of the salmon's exultant pride; and a dip like that sets one off high-hearted for the day.

Breakfast is a delight after such an appetiser; and fresh eggs and thin oatcakes, creamy porridge, golden marmalade, and all the wealth of Highland fare, disappear with startling despatch. There is no time to be wasted either, for Archie was to have the boat ready at half-past nine, and there is a Highland half-mile of road between the house and the loch. Archie would by no means scruple about expressing his candid, and perhaps not very complimentary, opinion if the party chanced to be late; and there is a kind of unwritten law in the house that the old servant is to be humoured as much as possible. So already the ladies are concerning themselves with

the making and packing of sandwiches, the due stowage of cold provender, jellies, fruit, milk, *et cetera*, and the apportioning to each his load. For the luncheon is to be, *bonâ fide*, a true Robinson Crusoe affair, no servants interfering; and each man must make himself useful.

"'Deed, and ye're no that late, efter a'!" is Archie's magnanimous reply to a deprecating remark of his mistress on reaching the loch-side. The sunshine has evidently thawed his usual crustiness. "Aye, mem," he replies further, "it'll be a fine mornin', a very fine mornin'; the hills is quite clear." After which deliverance he holds the boat steady alongside the little wooden landing-place, while provisions, kettles, and rugs are stowed away in the bow; and his grey eyes twinkle with pleased humour under their shaggy brows when the heir of the house whispers some bit of sly badinage in his ear. "Aye he iss a fine lad that, a fine lad!" the old fellow will be saying to himself when the boat has been pushed off, and he watches from the pier the stalwart object of his remark bestirring himself to haul up the sail.

There is just enough breeze to curl the water gently; and when the snowy sheet is hoisted the

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boat bends away gracefully before it, leaving a swirling track of foam and eddies in her wake. When the morning is so fine as this there is little fear of danger; but on these Highland lochs one never can foretell the moment when a sudden gust may come down from some hillside corrie; and cool nerves and a steady hand are needed to control sheet and tiller. The man who loses his wits on an emergency, who cannot slacken out sail or bring the boat's head up to wind when a squall strikes her, is no fit pilot for these waters, and many a fair freight has gone to the bottom from such an one holding the helm. A strong and ready hand is in charge to-day, however, and "black care" is a thing impossible on board, as the little craft goes bounding out upon the bosom of the loch.

And fair as a romance is the scene—the clear lake winding away among the mountains, its surface broken only by bosky islets that float in their own reflections—while the sunny air is full of the awe and silence of the Bens.

The only spot in all the scene where silence reigns not is on board the little boat herself; and a continuous ripple of merry chat and

joyous laughter floats away astern with her foam. From wild little islets passed by the way come breaths of pinewood and of heather in bloom, faint and delicious as the gales which drifted leeward of old from homeward-bound spice-argosies of the East. But the bright eyes on board are an inspiration themselves, independent of the sunshine and the pure and scented air; and the gladness of youth has broken forth—the contagion of happy and hopeful hearts. A sweet strain of melody floats once and again from the bow, where the singing throats are:

Speed, bonnie boat, like a bird on the wing!

—the Skye Boat Song, a farewell to Prince Charlie, that old-time idol of the Highland hearts. A sad melody it is, amid its sweetness, as are all the old Jacobite songs, with their breathing of hopes that were never to be fulfilled; and somehow, strains like that come to the ear with more real tenderness when sung as to-day by clear young voices among their native mountains.

Too soon, almost, the boat's keel grates upon the island beach—the strip of silver shingle under

the green-fringing trees. One would fain have prolonged especially the last part of the voyage, through the straits between the islands—straits like the miniature narrows of fairy-land, between whose near and bosky shores the fragile shallop of Oberon and Titania might almost be expected to appear, flying a web of the woodland gossamers for its sail. But other attractions enough lie within the island greenwood. There are delicate groups of birches to be sketched by those who have brought block and colours. In the rivulet dells some of the young ladies have been promised the discovery of the much-sought hart's-tongue fern. And for those who wish to recall to fancy the place's romance of the past, there are the remains of a ruined monastery to explore. But the merriest party of all, perhaps, is that retained for the preparation of luncheon; and it is wonderful in how short a time those dainty-fingered damsels have the tasteful display of linen and crystal and silver spread on a grassy plot, the clumsy-handed males being retained, after the fashion of the knights-errant of old, for the opening of baskets and boxes, and the seeking of leaves wherewith to decorate fruit-salvers, napkins, and the tablecloth's centre.

A merry meal it is, too, which follows, *al fresco* —"all in the greenwood free"—with the contortions of carvers on their knees, the popping of corks, and continual little explosions of mysterious laughter from the various groups perched on cloaks and rugs wherever a seat-hold offers round the roots of some gnarled oak or ash. Never more gallant do young men appear than when attending the wants of their fair comrades amid such a scene; and thrice happy is he who has such an opportunity of laying siege to the heart that he desires.

Then away again over the island they go, in parties of two and three; and the flutter of a light dress is to be seen and the joyous ripple of merry laughter to be heard in many a nook and dell hitherto invaded only by the antlered and timid deer. Many a pleasant word is spoken, and many a heart mayhap lightened of its care on such an afternoon; for the anxieties of civilised life come not to a sylvan retreat like this, and it is impossible to be aught but joyous-spirited when the surroundings are all of gladness.

But hark! they have caught a piper on the mainland, and have brought him over, and there is to be a dance on the grass. Yonder he goes,

under the edge of the trees, pouring forth a torrent of Highland reels. A brave sound that, setting the blood on fire and making it impossible to sit still. And merrily go the twinkling feet on the greensward—"figures of eight," and Reel o' Tulloch, Highland Schottische and Highland Fling. Wilder and faster grows the music, as the piper catches the spirit of the scene, and faster and faster the dancers foot it, with swirling tartans and flying skirts, till, at a final blast of the screaming chanter, the last partners throw themselves panting on the grass. Then a cup of tea makes a kindly refreshment and prevents heated throats from catching cold, and the boat has to be got ready, and the furniture of the feast stowed away. Afterwards, as the clear young moon begins to sparkle in the sky, the sail is set once more and the prow pointed for home. And if the wind fails, and some rowing has to be done, the exercise is good for keeping off the chill; and with song after song floating out across the water under the stars, a fitting end is made of a day without regrets.

TENNIS IN THE NORTH.

A PRETTY sight they are, these two, this fair summer morning, among the dewy branches of the rose-garden, all unconscious that anyone is looking at them. Minna, the daughter of the house, her white hands wet with flowers, is cutting fresh blossoms for the breakfast-table, and that tall fellow, the Professor, who at home used to get up only when the college bell was ringing, has actually risen half an hour earlier than he need have done in order to hold the basket for her. He is not looking at the costly little circlet of diamonds sparkling upon her finger, but at the bright dark eyes swimming under the edge of that delightful straw hat, where, doubtless, he is getting some fresh light upon the Greek particles. For they are engaged, Minna and he, and he is coming back in the autumn to carry her off and transplant her, like some bright-petalled flower, in his dim old college city.

But there is the voice of our host greeting

them from the porch below, and the Professor comes forward eagerly to shake hands with him. Young Rossdhu has driven down to say that some friends arrived at their house last night, and his mother will be glad if we can go up to tennis and luncheon there this morning. No other engagement will be broken by this, and a day on that velvet lawn among the pine-woods will be delightful; so the carriage has been ordered for eleven o'clock. The day promises to be very warm here by the sea, but more air will perhaps be moving up among the hills, and there will always be the shadow of the old beeches to rest under. When breakfast is over, then, it will just be time to get ready, though it is tempting to linger in the quiet cool little room, at the white-spread table with its freshness of flowers—the full-blowing Maréchal Niel and the languorous yellow tea-roses set there by dainty fingers.

Outside, the sunshine is very hot already, and the last dewdrop has long ago dried from the scarlet petals of the geraniums in the urns. The ponies at the door, too, are impatiently whisking their tails and twitching their ears to keep off the flies.

There could be no more enjoyable drive than that along this road of the far North, running a mile or two first within sight of the blue glistening sea, and then turning inland. The road itself, of that dazzling sandy whiteness peculiar to the district, is perfectly dry and smooth; and while from the deep grasses of the bank on each side, and from the warren beyond, come the hot passion-breath of the golden-flowered whin, and the soft amorous sigh of the milky-clouded thorn, there is ever in sight the broad country, rich in old forests, showing here and there the grey tower of some ancient castle, and stretching away to the mountains beyond, purple under the speckless sky. Then it turns off suddenly into the pine-woods of Rossdhu, and the wheels roll noiseless upon the soft bed of fir needles.

Forty years ago, when old Rossdhu found that, owing to the repeal of the Corn Laws, it would no longer be profitable to grow wheat, like many another proprietor in the North he planted his lands with trees. And so, while the country buys its bread with the riches of ore and fossil stored up æons ago in Nature's grim treasure-caverns underground, the soil, at

rest from plough and harrow, is growing young again amid the forests, under the brown depth of mouldering leaf and cone.

Deep quiet reigns among these warm pine-woods, a sort of enchanted stillness amid the yellow sunshine. In the bosky hollow where the brown butterfly is hovering, old Pan might be asleep among the fern. The feathery grasses everywhere are in flower, as high as a man's shoulder; above them shimmers the great green dragon-fly, two inches long, with his gossamer wings; and from among their clouds at places little ladybird beetles, like pin-heads, spotted scarlet and black, fall into the carriage in their flight. The wild strawberry, with its tiny white blossom, is growing on the sunny banks of the road, and wild rasps spread their tangle in the undergrowth beyond.

In the narrow meadow amidst the woods a lonely mower is at work, and the air is sweet with the scent of new-mown hay. He lifts his cap respectfully as the carriage passes, for the manners of the district have not been corrupted yet by contact with rude railway navvies, nor by the shortcomings of Board schools; and the peasant still exchanges a recognition with his

superior. Much more real kindliness might exist between the social classes if in our schools there were a Government grant for manners. All store nowadays seems to be set upon the three "Rs"—reading, writing, and arithmetic—as if the whole sum of human felicity lay in a knowledge of the "black art" of books.

The mower was singing to himself as we came up, a soft Gaelic song that kept time to the sweep of his scythe, and Minna blushes a little as she promises to translate it in the evening, for it is a song of confessed love. The man is happy, surely, singing as he sees the glistening swathes fall by his side to ripen in the sun: and well he may be, for has he not, like the happy birds, a nest, too, somewhere in these woods, and a blue-eyed brood that will greet his home-coming at nightfall.

But the manor-house stands close by now, and there, on the smooth green lawn among the trees, the tennis nets are spread, and the courts marked with lines on the grass. A beautiful old place it is, its grey stone walls hot with the sunshine, and, among the thick-climbing jessamine and fuchsia, the open windows revealing tempting depths of shadow within. The sound of the wheels

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on the gravel brings out old Rossdhu himself, the soul of hospitality, with half a dozen of his dogs barking a welcome after their fashion, and wagging their tails. Shaggy-bearded as some of his own peasants, the old gentleman is the pink of Highland courtesy, and he assists "Miss Minna" to alight as if she were a princess. "Alec," that is his son, he explains, "is busy inside," and the frequent popping of corks heard there intimates his occupation.

The dark cool drawing-room is bright with the light dresses of young girls, and musical with the murmur of happy laughter, while the air that just stirs the creamy gossamer of the curtains brings in with it the fragrance of the dark velvety wallflower still flowering outside in the sunshine before the window. The lady of the house is an invalid, and Rossdhu begs that Minna will give her just one song before everybody goes out to the game. So Minna draws off her gloves, and the piano is opened. And it is very pleasant to sit in the deep shadow by the open casement, looking out upon the sunny lawn and woods, and listening to the melody of that sweet young voice. It is a Jacobite song she sings, "The Auld House"—

some other such place as this, with low-roofed rooms, dark-panelled and oaken-rafftered, where the hopes of gentle hearts blossomed and withered long ago with the fortunes of their fair, ill-fated Prince. The plaintive words linger with their air in the memory, how "the auld ladye"—

> Here sheltered Scotland's heir,
> And clipped a lock wi' her ain hand
> Frae his lang yellow hair.

Then, afterwards, when everybody has had enough of the ices and the claret cup, there is the tennis. And though it is somewhat warm work for those actually playing, there are seats under the leafy beeches and chestnut-trees, where a quiet *tête-à-tête* can be enjoyed, and a lazy glance cast at the lithe, light-clad figures of the players out in the sunshine, and the white balls that fly to and fro across the nets.

THROUGH THE PASS.

RAIN is not to be heeded in the Highlands. It is the picturesque part of the weather here. The air grows fresher and sweeter in a shower, a richer fragrance comes out in the woods, and the true gloom and grandeur of the mountains can only be seen when the grey rain-veils are darkening and glittering among their glens. Even into the house steals the reviving freshness of the rain. The scent of the wet sweetbrier budding in the garden hedge enters at the open window; from the larch-wood near, the grateful thrushes can be heard sending forth more liquid trillings; and the daffodils, hung like yellow jewels along the lawn, appear fairer and brighter amid the shower. But better than wasting the day indoors it is to sally forth, strong-booted and roughly clad, breathe the freshness of the cool, new air, and start, staff in hand, for the hills themselves. It is worth while to defy the rain, for the road lies through woods dewy and dim as Keats

dreamed for his "Endymion." In their deep-secluded ways sometimes may be seen the timid roedeer, and on the fragrant air be heard the amorous crooning of wild doves.

In another month the quiet dells among these woods will be purple with dewy hyacinths, and many a sequestered nook will be dim with the blue forget-me-not. Already the open meads are sprinkled with patins of buttercup-gold, and a modest spot of cream here and there, under some mossy bank, betrays a late primrose. As yet, however, the delicate broidery of summer has not carpeted the forest floors. Under the dark, low-hanging branches of the spruce-firs—made a richer green by the rain—there is only a russet wealth of withered fern, with a warm depth of shadow such as Rembrandt loved to paint. Looking over a mossy old bridge parapet into the ferny dingle below, one can see the feathery grey larches powdered with sweet pink blossom, whose beauty few people know; and lower down, by the burn, the alders putting forth silky silver bud-tips—the "mouse's ear," which is the angler's sign that perch are to be caught. In open spaces where some forest-clearing has been done, the few silver-barked birches left

standing begin to show a smir of green, their graceful drooping branches looking like trailing sprays of delicate maidenhair; whilst here and there a spot is lit up by the golden glory of the whin.

The woods at this time of the year are full of life, for the cruel gun is silent, and many a happy home of bird and beast is hidden in the tangled undergrowth. In the elm-tops about the lodge behind by the river the rooks are giving each other much grandmotherly advice as to the rearing of broods. The cock pheasant's crow is to be heard frequently in the covers, and sometimes, from his open feeding-ground beside the path, a splendid bird rises suddenly with whirring wings, and sails royally away to more secluded fastnesses. Among the thick-leaved tangle of wild rhododendron on either hand blackbirds are fluttering joyously about their nests. Overhead, occasionally, passes the heavy, rushing flight of a wild pigeon. And more than once across a gleam of sunshine on the path runs a red squirrel, like a bit of living gold.

And while one treads on the brown, fallen needles of spruce and larch, the subtle forest scents fill the heart with many pleasant memories.

Never are these forest scents richer than when brought out by a shower, and it is curious how vividly some faint perfume drifting on the air will recall the happy scenes of other days, memories that are themselves the pensive fragrance of old age.

Through these ducal woods, and amid such pleasant sights and sounds, some seventy years ago wandered the "Wizard of the North," gathering material for his work. Fairer scenes a poet could not have chosen to gather inspiration from. Everyone may feel the eloquence of those northern hills in front, as everyone may enjoy the fragrance of the meadow violets: it needed a poet, however, to turn into speech the eloquence of the hills, as it needs a bee to turn into honey the fragrance of the flowers. Hither, therefore, fitly came Scott to his work; and over clachan and mountain alike he has woven the golden net of romance.

One may wander for miles through these woods and out beyond upon the old Highland road, with its low, mossy dykes, without meeting a single wayfarer. Only Nature herself, with gentle and sweet suggestion, speaks to him of the past or of the future. For the touch of the fresh cool air upon the face clears away all cobwebs of sordid

thought, and braces the faculties for new endeavour. Here, too, may be witnessed many a matchless transformation scene. For presently the rain ceases, the grey mist melts into the lucent blue of the sky, and wet hill and woodland sparkle and glow in a flood of hot sunshine. Immediately the shallow trout burn that comes down to the stepping-stones under the edge of the wood laughs gaily and dances over its pebbles; the mountain in front becomes a great sapphire burning gloriously under the blue; the larks rise, true sun-worshippers, pouring forth rills of song, libations to their God, at heaven's own gate; and from the twittering coppice flutter the vain chaffinches, with purple velvet heads, gold breasts, and silver-barred wings, to show themselves. Never do the vaunted birds of the tropics sing so joyously as the sweet hedge-warblers of Britain; and, ages before the alchemists came, thrush and robin and yellowhammer had found out Nature's own philosopher's-stone, and sang the praises of that sunshine which, like love and like human genius, turns all it touches into gold.

Steep as a wall in front rises the mountain barrier of the Highlands, its wooded and inacces-

sible shoulder projecting far into the loch. Only one passage is to be found through that rocky wall, and the road to it winds perilously round a little bay, between darkening precipice and lapping wave, before ascending the narrow and unseen defile. Daring would the assailant be who tried that steep and narrow path with a Highland foe above him! Scarcely more than a bridle-path, and steep as a staircase, it winds upward between rugged mountain walls. A single clansman, posted with gun and claymore behind one of its jutting crags, might hold the road against a regiment. High and dark overhead against the sky rise sombre pines and immemorial holly-trees, which from their torn and shattered girth might be—

> Seedlings of those that heavenward sprung
> While yet the maiden moon was young

—ancient enough, at anyrate, to have looked down on many a Highland foray. No one need marvel that the Macgregors thought themselves safe when they had driven their spoil through the Pass of Balmaha.

And glorious as well as welcome was the sight that met these clansmen when once actually

through the defile. For away to the north, Ben beyond Ben, far as eye could range, rose the fastnesses of their native mountains—silver waters flashing below round islands of fern, and the blue sky laughing above. Every glen had its memory, and every corrie was their inheritance, and even the traveller of the present day can know no more gorgeous spectacle than Ben Lomond after sunset burning in amethystine fire. For more reasons than one, therefore, might these rough old warriors rejoice when they had scaled the pass and beheld before them this wild but lovely vista of the country they called their home.

A HIGHLAND MORNING.

BREAKFAST is over—a Highland breakfast. Full justice has been done to the pleasant porridge and warm creamy milk, the fresh herrings that were alive in Loch Fyne a few hours ago, salmon from the splash-nets at Eriska, fragrant coffee, excellent home-made scones, and rich butter, tasting of the clover-field. The day is superb, and no one will spend more of it indoors than he can help; besides, the boat will be almost afloat now, and it will take a little time to bale her out. Bring the lines, then, with their gaudy red and yellow flies—it may be that a mackerel or two are to be caught in the loch; a novel of William Black's, "The Princess of Thule" or "MacLeod of Dare," and a pocketful of good cigars. It is hardly nine o'clock, yet the sun is dazzling and hot in the doorway. There is just enough air moving to bring up the fresh smell of the seaweed stirred by the rising tide. The white sandy

road is almost dry again after the rain which has fallen in the night, and as the kine, after their morning milking, are turned into the clover-field alongside, the foremost will hardly move from the gate to allow the others to enter, but bury their muzzles at once in the fresh, wet grass. The sea lies flashing and sparkling in the morning sunshine, and, on the dark Kingairloch mountains opposite, here and there the silver streak of a torrent still shows the effects of the morning shower. A sunny quiet fills the air. The faint screaming and splashing of gulls and sea-swallows far out over some shoal of fishes, and the sound of the oars in the rowlocks of the distant boat, can be distinctly heard, while the leisurely movements of the horse and cart going down the road a quarter of a mile away are quite distinguishable. The driver is whistling pleasantly; the tune is "Mo nighean donn bhoidheach." The last mists are leaving the mountain sides, and everything promises a hot day. Even the soft white clouds far up in the sky are every moment growing fainter, and already the thin shimmer of heat is ascending from the dry-stone dyke beside the road. The brambles on the other side of

the dry, grassy ditch show profuse clusters of bright red fruit, but there are no ripe berries to be seen—the children pluck them long before they are black. The scarlet hips, too, shine bravely on the sprays of hedgebrier, the tips of whose leaves are just beginning to turn brown. A small blue butterfly flickers across the road, and, rising at the dyke, is lost in a moment against the blue of the sky; while a silent humble-bee comes by, alights on the last empty bell of a seeded foxglove, and immediately tumbles out again disgusted, to continue his researches farther on. Over the hedge there, on the other side of the road, the oats seem yellow enough to cut, and among them are still in flower a few yellow Marguerites. The hill beyond glows purple yet with the heather, although its full bloom is past. Here and there plants of it are flowering close to the dyke by the roadside. It is the small sort, the kind the bees frequent, for they can get into it —the bell heather flowers earlier, and is over now.

But here is our boat. She is already afloat, the mainsail and jib are soon hoisted, there is just enough wind to carry her against the

tide, and Appin and Castle Stalker, the ruined stronghold of the Stewarts of Appin, are slowly hidden by the point behind. On the right is the green island of Lismore, low lying and fertile, with few houses visible upon it; only the slate roof of Lady Elphinstone's lodge flashes in the sunlight like a crystal. And beyond and above tower the dark mountains of Morven. To the south, in the offing, lie the islands of Easdale and Luing, famous for their slates.

Down we drift, past the Black Isle, to the narrows of Eriska. The tide is still running in towards Loch Creran, and the passage, which otherwise would have been difficult among the eddies and currents, is easily and quickly made. An immense volume of water must pour to and fro through that narrow channel to fill the loch at every tide. At these times the current rushes like a mill-race. We are inside presently, and as the air is very warm, and a pleasant little bay with a sandy beach lies close at hand on Eriska, there could be no better opportunity for a bathe.

No sooner said than done. The boat is anchored a little way from the beach, where through the clear green water the sandy bottom

can be seen some few fathoms below, and one after another enjoys a header from the bow, or slips gently over the stern. Pleasant as Arcady and utterly secluded is the spot; not even the crack of a gamekeeper's fowling-piece is to be heard on shore.

But what is this — that jig-jig-jigging of engines? A small steam yacht is coming into the loch, and — gracious goodness! there are ladies on board. To cover, all three, behind the boat, hang on by the gunwale, and trust in Providence to keep the yacht at a respectable distance. One has no ambition at such moments to court the suffrages even of the most delectable society. But the danger moves past, and though the fair ones on deck do smile at the phenomenal movements of our boat, and the ominous absence of occupants, who is a whit the worse? They will laugh with us, rather than at us, should we meet.

The breeze has freshened a little now, and will be enough to carry us up the loch amongst the currents and against the outflowing tide. Yonder goes the ferry-boat, crossing from Shian. It has a waggonette and horses on board, and the sweeps carry it over but slowly. The long

low island there, with its few stunted bushes, is seldom visited, and remains a favourite haunt of the graceful sea-swallows. Two months ago every grassy ledge upon its sides would have its couple of sea-swallow's eggs. See yonder, just beyond the rocky point, swimming quietly about, with watchful, intelligent eyes, there is the black head of a seal.

As the boat gets round the end of Craigailleach, the ruin of the ancient castle of Barcaldine, on the low neck of land across which the road winds from Connal, comes into sight. In the days of which Sir Walter Scott speaks in his "Lord of the Isles," when against the Bruce in Artornish Castle "Barcaldine's arm was high in air," there was scantier cultivation around the site of that black stronghold. The shrub ivy was not waving then from its beacon turret, and the retainers whose thatched cottages are still scattered among the fields around were rather caterans and pirates than peaceful crofters. Now, however, as Mr William Freeland puts it—

> The freebooters, reiving and killing,
> No longer swoop down from their glens,
> But delve by the bothie and shieling,
> Or shepherd their flocks on the bens.

The mountains in front seem to rise higher as we approach, and to cast a deeper silence on the narrowing water and motionless woods at their base. Barcaldine House, as secluded and delightful a spot as any in the Highlands, with its old-fashioned gardens and vineries, lies hidden among these woods.

Far up on the purple hillside at the head of the loch the eye can make out a lonely burying-place. A stone dyke guards the little enclosure of quiet graves. The spot is visible for many a mile around, and its presence ever in sight must have a tender and solemn effect in keeping alive the memory of the dead. Every day, as the crofter toils in his little field, or the shepherd takes the hill with his dogs, his eyes will turn to it, and he will think of wife or child who lie in that still, peaceful place, asleep under the calm sunshine and among the heather. Only sometimes will it be hidden —when the soft, white, trailing mists come down and weep their gentle tears upon the spot.

Directly in front, away beyond and above the other mountains, towers Ben Cruachan, a monarch among the peers. And below, on the shore of the loch, appears the long, low-roofed cottage,

half covered a month ago with crimson tropeolum, and half smothered among its roses, where lives the author of the humorous and valuable "Notes from Benderloch." Here is our destination. Let down the mainsail, let go the jib, and we will run ashore. It is not yet noon, and there are many hours before us to spend in the beautiful Barcaldine woods.

TILL DEATH US PART.

"IS she better, Doctor?"

"No; worse. Can't last through the night, I'm afraid."

The forester's wife pauses a moment, looking after the physician's carriage as it whirls out of sight in the gathering darkness along the road; then, exclaiming sadly, "Poor, dear young lady!" she closes again the heavy iron gates, and retires to her own happy hearthside within the lodge.

Night has all but fallen, and though it is still only dusk upon the open road outside, within the avenue the gloaming is already deepening into mirk, and under the shadows of the limes it will soon be quite dark. A quiet spring night. When the wheels of the doctor's carriage have retreated in the distance, no sound is to be heard amid the shadows but the twitter of a blackbird settling itself again to roost in its perfumed dreaming-place among the spruce branches, and the silvery

tinkle of a streamlet making its way at hand through the ferny under-tangle of the wood. The air is rich with the fresh sweetness of budding life—the breath of unseen primroses opening their creamy petals upon dewy moss-banks in the darkness. Born amid the stillness, new, vague hopes stir within the heart; everywhere seems the delicious promise of the time of blossom and leaf that is to be; and the motionless night itself seems conscious of the coming of desire. It is a night to inspire a poet or a lover; every faint wood-scent, the cool touch of the night air itself upon the cheek, bringing with it some subtle suggestion, the more delightful that it is undefined, setting the pulse of youth a-beating with thoughts of a glad to-morrow.

Alas for those to whom no morrow will come!

At the upper end of the long avenue a faint light is shining yet in two windows of the many-gabled mansion-house. One of the windows is open, and within, at a small table, leaning his head upon his hand, can be seen the figure of a man. It is the master of the house. He has just received the last sentence of the physician, "I can be of no further service. The end will

probably come before to-morrow"; and the words are still in his ears, beating like a leaden pendulum against his heart. Straight before him into the dark night he is gazing; but the eyes that look are tearless; only the drawn line about his mouth and the pitiful twitching of his lip bespeak the emotion that is working within. Yet he is not altogether left to himself. The air from the open window stirs his hair and fans his pale cheek—Nature, like a sweet and gentle friend, would offer him the soothing of her sympathy. Probably he is unconscious of it—drowning in the hopeless flood-tide of his grief; but, with the gentle air stealing in from the darkness outside, the influence of the great Reconciler, mother-heart of all mankind, is already touching him. While his ear takes in the soft movements of the nurse in the next room, tending all that is dearest to him on earth, his heart, stirred unconsciously by the subtle suggestions of the incoming night-scents, is travelling, torn with regret, through the tender avenues of the past. And strangely fresh in every detail reappear those scenes imprinted upon the pages of memory by the sunshine of love.

He is in a cottager's garden, listening, amid the

hum of the hives and the glory of old-fashioned wallflower borders, to the gossip of the simple old soul who is showing him her little domain. There is the quick trotting of a pony. A low phaeton drives past on the road beneath. And he has seen and shared the smiling glance of a gentle, lovely face — a sunny glimpse to be remembered. Again, he has been picnicking with friends, a family party, on the shore of a Highland loch, and has noticed with mingled admiration and resentment that while all others have been seeking their own enjoyment, one pair of frank and willing little hands has wrought the whole comfort of the group. They are in the shallops, rowing home, and as, pulling at his oar, he listens to the innocent freshness of a shy young voice singing some Highland boat-song, he becomes conscious for the first time of a vista before him of wondrous new and fair possibilities—of a path in life which is not to be trodden alone. Once more. It is a secluded spot. He has wandered in happy company, from his party. Clear as yesterday comes back the memory of the scene. In front some tented waggons, rust-brown with wandering years, trail down the woodland by-road. The gipsy woman

has taken his silver coin, and, with a keen, shrewd glance, has wished the "lady and gentleman a happy bridal!" He has seized the moment, has whispered the secret which was no secret, and has read in shining eyes the answer of his hopes.

All that was a year ago, little more—woodland and lake and garden, with a hundred other scenes and episodes as tender, which, crowding back, fill his heart to bursting; and now——

He rises, closing the window, and passes into the adjoining room.

Treading softly on the thick carpet, a glance assures him that nothing has altered in the sick-chamber since he left it with the physician. Only amid the momentous stillness, in the subdued light by the fire, the trim, white-aproned nurse is trying to read. A whisper to her—she will be called if required; and, closing the door noiselessly behind her, she leaves him to watch alone.

Alone, for the last time, with all that is dear to him, the flower that is fading out of his life so soon! He turns to the bed. There, pale with preternatural loveliness, her dark hair spread like a cloud upon the pillow, lies the sunny sweetheart, the shy bride of a year ago. A

faint moan, the glistening of a tear between the closed eyelids, betrays the grief that is haunting that strange shadowland between this world and the next—grief for that which was not to be! He can look no more! Sinking into a chair by the fire, he buries his face in his hands. It is the hour of his despair.

Midnight has long passed; the fire is sinking unheeded in the grate; and he has not moved.

"Arthur!"

In a moment he is by the bed, that thin, hot hand in his, gazing heartbroken into the face of his wife. In those grey eyes of hers there is no second thought. Love, for the time is short, has dropped his last disguise, and looks forth from them with unutterable tenderness and regret. "Arthur!" She lingers fondly upon his name, and her fingers push the hair tenderly from his brow—"Arthur!"

But there is a sudden change. A look of terror springs to her eyes, and she clings wildly to his arm. Is this the end? She would have fallen back upon the pillow had not his arm been round her. With a despairing effort, her eyes filling with tears, she articulates, "We have—been—very—happy—my dear!" Their lips meet

for the last time—a long, long farewell. Then a second shadow passes over her face. He lays her gently back upon the pillow. The wistful, eager look dies away out of her eyes. It is all over. He is alone, kneeling by the bed, his face pressed deep into his hands. A gust of wind, rising outside, shakes the sash of the window; the crow of chanticleer is heard far off at the stables: it is three o'clock, the coldest hour of the night.

And in the lodge at the foot of the avenue, at that hour, the young forester's wife, stirring softly in her sleep, presses the month-old babe beside her closer to her heart.

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A FOREST WEDDING.

THOUGH it is not yet seven o'clock, the winter night, in this northern parish, has quite closed in, and it is already very dark. When the sun set, far in the south, some hours ago, its disc gleamed coppery red through brown mist veils as of rising smoke, and the shepherd's wife on the moor, as she brought in her peats for the night, said she thought there would be more snow before morning. It has not yet begun to fall, however, when the minister, wrapped up to the ears in his heavy coat, and his feet encased in strong, thick-soled boots, pulling on a pair of rough worsted gloves, and calling his spaniel from her place on the study hearth, sets out from his comfortable manse.

Presently, as he turns from the beaten highway into the snow-clad woods of the manor, hearing the bell of the distant town steeple behind him striking the hour, he gives an encouraging word to his dog, and quickens his

steps a little. As he passes the humble window of the gate-lodge, he pauses a moment—there was a sound; yes, it is audible again—a mother crooning softly over her child; and his eye glistens as his ear catches the lullaby, old bachelor as he is. From the chimney on the low roof, too, there steals down among the trees the savoury fragrance of the evening meal. The father, one of the under-gamekeepers on the estate, evidently has not come home yet, and his young wife is waiting for him.

The sky hangs soft and very dark overhead, the tree-tops are all but lost in it, and one can almost fancy he hears the drifting of the coming snow. But all is silent, not a branch in the forest stirs, and between the black tree-trunks the white sheet can be seen stretching stainless and undisturbed on either hand into the mysterious depths of the woods. The trees themselves, unshaken all these weeks by wind or squirrel or woodbird, raise into the night their branches robed to the remotest twig in the matchless lâcework of the frost.

But see! Along the hollow, to the left, can be caught a glimpse of the manor-house, its windows, most of them, aglow with light. A grey, stately old place it is, in the midst of

its woods, eloquent with the memories of long-past centuries. Royalty has been entertained there in bygone days, and in the woodland aisles around has echoed merrily the laughter of many a gay party from the Court, distant only a morning's ride. But storm after storm has swept the land since then; that gay Court's palace lies a ruin now; and while the race of the humble peasant still thrives in the manor woods, the race of the manor lord and the race of the kings themselves of those days have passed from the earth for ever.

There is no spot in so old a land but has its memories, sad and gay. Somewhere in these woods, in days still farther gone, a national hero was betrayed, and on the moorland ridge, a mile away, a king's army suffered defeat. But the minister passes on. His errand to-night is neither to palace nor castle, yet it may be that the simple hearts he is presently to unite will beat as happily under a lowly roof of thatch as do those of the gentle owners in their mansion yonder.

By degrees, as he presses on, the path becomes rougher, the trees deepen the darkness overhead, and hardly a former footstep has left its trace in the undrifted snow. The solitude might almost

be primeval, so absolute is the silence in these untrodden recesses. The solitary snapping, once, of a rime-laden branch has only testified amid the stillness to the intensity of the frost. At last, however, the path widens somewhat, there is a little clearing and a forsaken lodge, and beyond, here and there in the open, gleam the scattered lights of the village. A sequestered spot it is, bowered in summer by the whispering woods, and in winter buried in the forest solitudes by the swathing snow.

But there is merriment enough to-night in the little community; and the frequent ring of laughter from the nearest cottage, as well as the warm glow of firelight streaming from its threshold and windows, deep-set under the thatch, tell where the festivities are going forward. It is the cottage of the bride's father: all the village has assembled here to assist in the ceremony, and they are waiting now for the minister. The laughter subsides as he lifts the latch and enters, stamping in the doorway to shake the snow from his feet; and all eyes are turned upon him, as the goodman of the house, a grizzled forester of sixty winters, hastens forward with a welcome to help him out of his

coat. It is a comfortable scene, the interior of the low-raftered kitchen, lit up rather by the warm glow of the open fire than by the candles set on table and window-shelf. By the hearth are gathered the older folk—the many-wrinkled granny, in comely white mutch and kerchief; the few matrons, with smoothly-braided hair, and little ornament, except a well-worn ring or two; and the men in decent homespun; while farther back are grouped the more youthful members of the party—broad-shouldered young fellows and merry-eyed lasses, excited a little by the somewhat infectious inspiration of the occasion. Everything in the humble apartment is as clean as housewifely care can make it; not a speck is to be seen on the brown stones of the floor, and above the black shining chimney-piece the brass candlesticks glitter like gold. On the snowy dresser, below the well-filled plate-rack, is piled in profusion the substantial fare which will do duty later on. Meanwhile, on the white deal table in the middle of the room is set only the well-worn family Bible.

The minister, with a kindly word, has shaken the hand of the somewhat embarrassed bride-groom, and stands now, inquiring pleasantly

after granny's eyesight, by the fire. There is a pause of expectancy, a hurried messenger or two pass between the rooms, and then the bride, a handsome young woman of twenty-two or so, is brought in by her mother from "ben the hoose," as the only other apartment is called. With a look of happy pride at the object of his affection, the bridegroom takes his place by her side at the farther end of the table, and the minister, glancing round to see that all is ready, opens the Bible.

After a brief but earnest prayer, and the reading of a short passage of Scripture, the good old man addresses them in a few solemn yet kindly words. They are taking the most serious step in life; let them look to Heaven for a blessing upon it. The future may bring them prosperity; let them see that it does not cool their affection. It may also have trials in store for them; let these be lightened by being shared between them. Above all, let them remember to be open-hearted to one another. Then he asks if they are willing to be wedded "for better or for worse," bids them join hands, engages in another most momentous prayer, and finally declaring them

man and wife, with the solemn injunction, "Whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder," ends the short ceremony.

Immediately there is a great stir, shaking of hands with the bridegroom, and kissing of the bride; the gallant "best man," somehow, unwarrantably extending the salutation to the blushing bridesmaid. The mother sheds a few quiet tears, and granny, by the fire, wakens up to speak of her own wedding day.

But the proper papers have been signed, and the minister, followed to the door by the overflowing thanks of the little family, and refusing all offers of escort, leaves the homely company to its enjoyment—for the dance will be kept up till a late hour in the morning. The night air is bracing, after the warmth inside, and, as the sky has cleared a little by this time, the pathway back through the woods will be better seen by the silvery sparkle of the frosty stars.

LOCH LOMOND ICE-BOUND.

THERE could hardly be a greater contrast than that between the fog-laden atmosphere of Queen Street Station, Glasgow, on a winter morning, and the frosty, bracing air of the country outside. Ever since the train emerged from the murky gloom of the long city tunnel into the open freedom of the frost-covered fields, the sense of exhilaration has been increasing. Sounds of laughter from the compartments before and behind bespeak the high spirits of the occupants; while at every roadside station along the Clyde valley fresh parties of pleasure-seekers, their cheeks red and eyes bright with the cold, have added to the freight, and swelled the merriment. The ice on Loch Lomond is "bearing," and the clash of skates is in the air.

Slowly at last the train, crammed by this time with skaters of both sexes and all ages, pants into the station at Balloch Pier. Before it has stopped, the doors of the carriages swing open,

and an eager crowd swarms out upon the platform. The throng chokes the stairway down the face of the pier, so many impatiently hasten back to the shore; there is a scramble over a wire fence, a stampede across a well-trodden stubble-field to the loch, and then the stream of enthusiasts disperses in all directions to don the necessary foot-gear.

Different indeed is the scene now from what it was in summer! Then the clear water glistened and twinkled in the sunshine, the white sail of a boat slowly moved across the dark green of a distant island, and the mountains beyond rose, purple and grey, into a fleckless sky; while one of the little loch steamers at the pier blew clouds of steam noisily from its funnel, as it took on board its gay crowd of tourists. Now no lapse of water is to be heard upon the pebbles, not a whisper moves among the frosted fretwork of the trees. The landscape everywhere is draped and lifeless, the loch itself lies a level sheet of snow, and far up yonder, above the dark narrows where the waters are still unfrozen, Ben Lomond raises his shoulder, ermine-clad, into a darkling heaven. The twin steamers, too, lie prisoned in the ice, crusted white, and motionless as Lot's wife.

If Nature herself, however, is crystallised into

silence and stillness, there is both movement and sound of another sort about. Here at a run over the field to the ice comes a schoolboy, as eager as if the whole day were not before him, his wooden skates clashing together as he stumbles on the molehills. Farther off a young man and a maiden are transacting in orthodox fashion the idyll of the ice, she seated on what has ordinarily been a mooring post, and holding out a dainty boot, while he, kneeling devotedly in the snow, buckles on her skate. All along the shore, on every hillock that affords a seat, are groups of eager enthusiasts, busy with straps and buckles; and the shrill whirring sound of the ice tells that many of the new-comers are already moving over it.

But the last refractory screw-nut is adjusted—Mercury has buckled on his wings; and yonder, two miles away, lies Inch Murren. Each winter, when the loch is frozen, the first person who crosses on foot to the island receives a pair of deer antlers as a trophy; and often, before the ice is very strong, the efforts of some bold skater to win the honours are exciting enough. Since the trophy was won this year,* however, thousands

* 1882, I think.

of pleasure-seekers have crossed the loch ; venders of hot coffee and biscuits have established themselves on the shore of the island, under the ruined keep ; and a rink of curlers has taken possession of the little bay. Where the deer came down to drink in summer, there mingles now the crackling roar of heavy stones hurled along the ice, with shrieks of vulgar laughter as some conspicuous skater comes to grief. The cries of the curlers themselves are loud and puzzling enough. At the near end of the rink the leader, a stout, grizzled countryman, shouts with many explanatory gestures to the player at the far end to "Tak' a wick aff the fore stane, and lie in front to gaird." The person addressed, evidently a clergyman (for on the ice social distinctions are forgotten), sends his cheese-shaped block of granite "birling" towards his instructor, and, as it comes along, the cries of the players stationed on either side of the rink with brushes to "soup her up," and their vigorous efforts to smooth the path before it, are exciting as well as amusing, until the stone comes crashing in at last among the others round the mark.

The "roaring game" is perhaps more interesting to the player than to the onlooker, but

the enthusiasm it excites, and the exertion it requires, are exactly suited to the season, and prepare its votaries to enjoy most heartily the traditional "curler's dinner" of corned beef and greens.

One soon grows tired of the noise and stir around this oasis of the ice. Indeed, the laughter and the movement seem almost sacrilege in a place where so lately the autumn leaves dropped silently into the clear brown water below, where the plash of a trout made stillness felt, and the solitude was unbroken by the step of man. Away, then, from the coffee-stands and the curling-rink, from the shouting of the shinty-players, and the fragrance of intolerable cigarettes! The loch is frozen all the way to Luss; last night's wind has swept every particle of snow from the surface; and to the little loch village, out of sight in the bay ahead, stretch seven miles of ice, smooth as black glass.

Easily as thought the skates curl over the keen ice. The air is clear, cold, and bracing, with just a faint odour of the shore woods upon it; and curve after curve on the "outside edge" adds, every moment, to the exhilarating sense of power and the conscious poetry of

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motion. It is a new and strange sensation, this flight for miles over ice whose surface has till now known no invasion. One feels as an astronomer must, when exploring new depths of Heaven—

> Or like stout Cortez, when, with eagle eyes,
> He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
> Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Lonely and far stretches the level realm of ice away northward to the dark narrows of the loch, where, under the steep dark sides of the mountains, the water is too deep to freeze. To terrible tragedy have the black depths under foot been witness. Here it was that Sir James Colquhoun, returning from a hunting party on one of the islands, in his boat, deep-laden with deer, was caught by a sudden squall on the loch and drowned, and it was long before the hidden depths gave up their prey. For the waters that lie motionless now in their icy prison are given to rise and rage at a moment's warning; and many are the fair pleasure freights they have swallowed. Across these waters, too, in the days when might was right, and the Highlands lived by helping themselves, have not the boats of

the Red Macgregor swept down by night from the narrows to pillage and burn? For the Rob Roy country lies opposite among the mountains.

But away! away! this is the joyous motion of a bird, and the miles fly under foot without effort. It is seven miles from Balloch; and the fatigue of the distance has been trifling. A point of land, covered with trees, runs out into the loch, and a mile beyond lies Luss. Another turn, and a little bay is discovered, most like, in all the world, a miniature scene from fairy-land. The glassy ice sleeps on the crusted shore; birch and beech and hazel hang motionless around, a delicate tracery of snow; not a squirrel moves; the silence is perfect. The spot is under the spell of the Frost King. Not altogether, though, for a robin flutters down with a twitter from a shaken spray, and, proud of his scarlet breast, hops bravely out upon the ice.

At hand, however, appears the chimney of the inn, and—inspiring sight!—there is smoke rising from it. The air of the loch is appetising, and, as it is now almost five o'clock, something more solid than a sandwich seems desirable. Unbuckle the skates, therefore, and, following the windings of that narrow loch-side road among the trees, let

us awaken the hospitality of mine host. It will be dark before we start for home; but the sky is clear, there will be a full moon, and, under the scintillations of the frosty stars, it will be a merry party that skims back over the ice by night to Balloch.

HALLOWMAS EVE.

"THE good old customs of the country are passing away."

No speech, perhaps, is oftener heard than this when, over the walnuts and the wine, about Christmas time or Hallowe'en, the talk has turned upon the subject of old-fashioned festivities. And the sentiment seldom fails to evoke a sigh of regret, and to awake recollections of frolic mirth enjoyed in lighter-hearted days. But while there is, without doubt, truth in the remark, happily it is not altogether true. The portly old gentleman who animadverts upon the subject is generally too apt to take for granted that, because for some decades he has ceased to share in these festal sports, the sports themselves have ceased to be observed. If, however, the speaker were to return upon such a night as All Hallow's Eve to the village where perchance his youthful years were passed, he might find that the quaint and merry customs he laments do not

altogether belong to the golden dust of long-forgotten days. Though he himself has grown older and graver, the great heart of the world has remained ever young; and ever still, as the traditional occasions come round, there breaks forth amid its long-accustomed scenes the ancient madcap carnival of mirth.

Not, indeed, quite as in bygone times is this festival of Hallowe'en now observed. The witches no longer, as in days of yore, are believed to hold their revels then upon the green-sward, and something of the ancient superstition which otherwise lent awe to the eve of All Saints' Day has been dispelled by modern education. But enough remains of uncanny feeling to lend interest to the more mysterious proceedings of the night; and the spirit of simple enjoyment may be trusted to keep alive for its own sake most of the mirth-giving functions of the feast. An institution which took its origin probably from some strange rite of far-back pagan times, which has managed to survive countless changes of thought, and, like a rolling snowball, to incorporate in itself traces of the Crusades, of the mediæval church mysteries or miracle plays, and of later witchcraft and elfin superstitions,

must have a strong hold somewhere upon human nature, and is not likely to disappear quite at once even before the blast of the steam-engine and the roll of the printing-press.

If one wishes to know how lads and lasses spent their Hallowe'en in Ayrshire a hundred years ago, he has but to read the famous description of the occasion written by the glowing peasant-pen of Burns; and cold indeed must be his imagination if he does not catch from that description something of the frolic spirit of the night. In these lines he may hear the timid lasses "skirl" as their sweethearts surprise them pulling the fateful corn-stalks; he may watch Jamie Fleck secretly sowing his handful of hemp-seed, and waiting for the image of his destined true-love to appear behind him in the act of harrowing it; he may see Meg in the empty barn, winnowing her "wechts o' naething," and likewise waiting for her true-love's presentment; and he may laugh at the mishap befalling the wanton widow as she dips her left sleeve in the rivulet at the meeting of three lairds' lands. But one must not think that these time-honoured rites are all unpractised now.

Let him step into some great farm-kitchen

of the Lothians, with its red fire roaring up the chimney, its plate-racks gleaming on the walls, and dressers, tables, and chairs clean as scrubbing can make them, and he will find in practice bits of traditional folklore and traits of human nature equally worthy of the poet's pen.

The place for the moment is empty, the lamps shining from their bright tin sconces on the walls upon unoccupied wooden settles and chairs; for lads and lasses together have betaken themselves to pull each his particular prophetic stock in the kailyard at hand. But presently, with shouts of laughter, they come streaming in from the darkness; and shrieks of merriment greet the discovery of the fortune which has befallen individual members of the company. For, according as the stock lighted on in the dark turns out to be straight or crooked, and its taste sweet or bitter, so the appearance and disposition of its possessor's future mate will be; and according as earth has clung to the uptorn root or not will the pockets of the future pair be well filled or the reverse. A merry party these men and maidens make, bringing in with them, as they enter, a breeze of the cool night air, and a breath of the sweet, fresh-smelling

earth. And from the flaming cheeks and sparkling eyes of at least one of the laughing girls, it is to be doubted that she has met outside with somewhat warmer and more certain assurance of the personality of her future partner in life than is likely to be afforded by her stock of curly kail.

Another method of divination, however, presently engrosses all attention indoors. Three bowls are set out on the hearth—one full of clean water, one muddy, and the remaining vessel empty. One after another each lad and lass is blindfolded, the position of the bowls is changed in thimble-rigging fashion, and he or she is led forward and invited to place a hand in one. According as the dish chosen proves dirty, clean, or empty, will the inquirer of the Fates marry a widow or a maid, or remain a bachelor; and shrieks of merriment are occasioned by the appropriate mishaps which befall the most confident.

Then there is the burning of nuts to be done in the great kitchen-fire—a method of discovering whether the future wedded state is to be one of peace or discord. And it is amusing to see the quietest of the maids drop two nuts side by side

into a red corner of the coal, blushing at the guesses made by her merry companions, but shyly whispering to herself, "This is Patey and this is me," and watching with bashful eagerness as the two take fire together. Puff! Alas for her hopes, poor child! "Patey" has shot away from her side; and the hot tears are woefully near her eyes as she notices that he has settled down to burn by the nut of her neighbour. May her sorrows, sweet lass, never have darker cause than this imaginary presage of losing a fickle lover!

And now, by way of supper, a mighty platter of "champed" potatoes is placed upon the table —a pile mountain high, in which are hidden somewhere a ring, a sixpence, a thimble, and a button. The lamps are put out, each person is armed with a spoon, and in the uncertain light of the glowing fire the mystic procession moves round the table in single file. Each one as he passes the platter takes a spoonful of potatoes, and he or she who finds the ring is fated to be first married. The sixpence is an augury of wealth, and the finding of the thimble or the button is, according to the sex of the finder, an indication that he or she will marry a maiden spouse or will die single.

But, listen! There is a sudden loud knocking at the door. It heralds the time-honoured visitation of the Guizards, a ceremony annually renewed by each succeeding generation of village boys. In they stalk, got up in grotesque improvisations of mumming costume, each armed with a wooden sword, and carrying a ghostly lantern hollowed out of a giant turnip. "Here comes in Galoshin," as that individual himself informs the company — being doubtless the traditional representative of some forgotten Templar Knight; and presently he is engaged in a sanguinary hand-to-hand encounter with another wooden-sworded champion upon the floor. Many are the bold words that are said and the doughty deeds that are done; and through the whole performance one may see, as Scott remarked in a note to "Marmion," traces of the ancient monkish plays and the revels of the mediæval Lord of Misrule. At the end the players are contented with a reward of apples and nuts, and a share in their elders' merriment.

Tubs full of water are placed on the floor, and dozens of red-cheeked apples set swimming in them; and immediately a wild scene of revel ensues, as all and sundry, men and maids, on

their knees, seek to snatch the floating apples with their teeth. Many an unexpected ducking is got, and shrieks of laughter greet each mishap and each ineffectual effort to secure a prize. Then there is a wild game of blind man's buff, led off by Galoshin himself, who turns out, now that his burnt cork and whiskers have been washed off, to be one of the younger men of the house, and the soul of all the fun. And from the sly fashion in which he avoids other quarry, and keeps hemming one rosy little maid into corners, compelling her to spring shrieking over settles and chairs, it may be gathered that the knowing fellow is no more blinded than he wishes himself to be.

And so the night goes on, a night of whole-hearted and innocent mirth—enough to prove that the spirit of old-fashioned revelry is by no means dead, and that, for at least one night in the year, the young blood of Lowland and Lothian still can make as much and as joyous merriment as ever did its progenitors a hundred years ago.

HOGMANAY.

CONSPICUOUS among the folk-customs which, north of the Tweed, have survived from the remotest antiquity, remains that of welcoming with wassail and good wishes the birth of the New Year. To all appearance a pagan custom, dating from the pre-Christian past, it probably owes its permanence to instincts acquired amid the superstitions of the Dark Ages. Of late years, it is true, under the influence of southern fashion, the festival of Christmas has seemed to be superseding that of New Year's Eve. But, as with many other picturesque and interesting customs of Scotland, the older observance remains yet deeply rooted in the heart of the people, and, having already survived so many changes of habit and creed, may be expected to outlive even this latest inroad.

There is much to be said, too, for the keeping of Hogmanay. Christmas, indeed, is the commemoration of a great religious event, and even

in the North it appears interesting and appropriate enough as a Church festival; while to those with whom its observance has been a national and family custom it contains, of course, an ample significance. But to people who have inherited the instinct with their blood, the end of the year remains a more fitting time for recalling the deeds and the days that are past; and the keeping of Hogmanay awakens, north of the Border, a subtle train of early feelings and associations—the pensive charm and sweetness of "auld lang syne." Scarcely a dwelling is there, cottage or hall, in the breadth of all broad Scotland, which has not, time out of mind, on this night of the year witnessed some observance of the ancient and pleasant festival. Alike under gilded ceilings and roofs of thatch there is to be heard then the toasting of old memories and the pledging of health and fortune to the house and its occupants throughout the dawning year. About every village cross, too, as the last moments of the year approach, the young men of the neighbourhood have ever been wont to gather to greet the incoming day with shouts of rejoicing and with the curious traditional custom of "first-footing." Even in the cities, where contact with

the world tends greatly to obliterate such folk-customs, it is curious to see the ancient festival year after year assert itself, its observance the better assured, probably, because it brings back to those who attend it the scenes and memories of earlier, and, perhaps, happier days.

Ever with the same details the time-honoured proceeding may be witnessed on the night of any 31st day of December at the Cross of the ancient city of St Mungo.

Some time before midnight the roar of the day's traffic has died out of the streets. The great warehouses are closed, and their windows gaze, like sightless eyes, into the deserted thoroughfares. To one imbued with the spirit of the hour, it is as if the city herself were thinking of the past; and the sudden sweep of wind that comes and dies away seems a sigh of regret for her departed glories. Many memories cluster about this ancient heart of Glasgow; and at such an hour, and upon such a night, it would seem little more than natural if the historic figures of the past should move again abroad. Strangely enough, too, the creatures of imagination present a no less tangible presence to the mind's eye than the real persons of bygone days. Behind

the tall, limping figure of Sir Walter Scott, a curious visitor here, the equally immortal Bailie picks his steps; and as the bold Rob Roy strides past into the shadow, there is heard the tramp of Cromwell's bodyguard and the clatter of the Regent Moray's cavalry. For it was out by the Gallowgate here, and across the river by the Briggate, that the troops of the Protestant lords marched in 1568 to the battle of Langside; and at the head of Saltmarket the Protector Cromwell quartered himself in 1650, issued his orders, and held levees. In the Gallowgate yet, though sore transformed from its ancient glory, stands that once-famous inn, the Saracen's Head, at which the learned Dr Johnson put up while passing through Glasgow on his Hebridean tour. Close by the Cross, where the street lamps shine on the shuttered windows of a great east-end warehouse, stood the town-house of the Earls of Lennox; and past it, up the gentle hill, and still wearing something of its old-world look, bends the High Street with its memories. Out of sight up there the façade of the venerable College, *alma mater* of Campbell the poet, Smollett the novelist, Archbishop Tait, and a host of great divines, was wont for over four hundred years

to frown upon the pavement. The Vandal, however, has at last prevailed against it. A few paces farther and the gigantic form of Sir William Wallace still seems to slaughter his enemies at the Bell o' the Brae. And beyond all, on the slope of the hollow where the classic Molendinar once flowed, surrounded in the darkness by its city of the dead, stands the grey cathedral of St Kentigern.

The spot itself, however, has indeed changed with time, and but few links are left it to recall bygone days. The loud tramp of Dundee's dragoons long since died away in Rottenrow. No longer do the rustling gowns of bishop and dean sweep through the cathedral choir. Even the house from which the ill-fated Lord Darnley, sick to death, was carried to the lonely Kirk o' Fields three hundred years ago, has disappeared. Cavalier and Covenanter and Virginia merchant have given place to the petty trader and the artizan. The house at the foot of Glassford Street, where Prince Charlie put up in the '45, has been pulled down; and of the walls which witnessed the rejoicing bonfires of the Whig burgesses after the news of Culloden, few are left but those of the dim cathedral. Even the

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Saltmarket at hand has been so altered of late years, that if worthy Bailie Nicol Jarvie were to step out again on the causeway he would find no trace at all of the narrow, ill-paved, unlighted lane of his day, with its high, rickety houses, and creaking shop-signs.

Rather must the city pride herself now upon her glories of the present. Far off, upon the great Clyde artery at Govan, where the nets of the salmon-fishers once hung in the sun to dry, the noise of a myriad hammers has just ceased for the holiday, and the iron skeletons of a hundred ships stand silent in the darkness—spectres not of the past but of the future. Overhead, between the high house-roofs, the heaven is very dark, and above the lanterns of the clock the Tron steeple is hidden from sight; but one side of the neighbouring tower—that of the ancient Tolbooth in High Street—reflects the red glare, from a mile away, of the iron furnaces at Hutchesontown—those undying vestal fires of the nineteenth century; and the golden vane upon the spire shines, strangely lit, alone in the dark heaven. Significant indications, these, of the strong modern life that throbs in the veins of the ancient city.

But the great gilt hand of the clock overhead is approaching midnight, and along the streets, from the four points of the compass, comes the sound of innumerable hastening feet. It is the crowd gathering to observe this immemorial ceremony of "bringing in the year."

Few of the revellers, probably, reflect upon the antiquity of the custom they are observing; if they did, it might, perhaps, lend the proceeding a deeper interest in their eyes. To survive so many vicissitudes of history, the rite must once have possessed a solemn religious meaning. On the bank of the river below, the rough Norse rover has shouted "Wæs hael" to Thor; on the crest of the hill above, the Roman warrior has poured libations to Jove. Bishops of a feudal church within the storied cathedral walls have said the mass of Christ; and the spires of many a Presbyterian kirk now rise round the ancient Cross. But through all changes, through the ebb and flow of Faith and Fear, has come down the relic of an older worship, and in the mistletoe and the New-Year mysteries the Druid lives among us still. These people are gathering now, as for ages their race has gathered, to bid farewell to the old year and

welcome to the new, and to pour their mystic sacrifice to Time—not, indeed, as of old, upon the unconscious earth nor within the stone circle of a rude astronomy, but at least under the open sky, and with something of the ancient wish-rites of the runes.

Hundreds in number they come, and over all the open space—at corners where in the daytime knots of loafers are for ever to be seen, as well as on the Trongate pavement, where, all day long, recruiting sergeants, splendid in red and gold, pace magnificently to and fro—in little groups they wait the stroke of twelve. Each man has brought with him a bottle, and in each man's pocket there is hidden a glass, one that has seen service and lost its stem being the popular variety.

Quickly enough the final seconds of the year run out. The hand of the great clock reaches and touches the hour. At last it strikes, a single bell—one, two, three—a bold sound in the silence; and immediately it is answered by a bewildering clangour from all the city belfries. Before the last stroke has died away, a wild cheer bursts from the throat of the waiting crowd below. There is a great commotion

among the little groups; and, as cheer after cheer rings up into the sky, from the belfry overhead the city chimes ring out upon the night their welcome to the New Year.

Meanwhile everyone is drinking the health of everyone else, Celt and Saxon, countryman and citizen; and as no one can pass an acquaintance without hospitality offered and taken, and as, moreover, the dew of Ben Nevis is somewhat potent, the shaking of hands and wishing of good luck soon become fairly exuberant. Presently, however, everyone sets off to first-foot his friends.

The origin of this ceremony it is difficult to suggest, unless it be to represent some priestly visitation, a sacrament assuring to the people throughout the coming year the blessings of food and drink. A door-to-door proceeding, at any-rate, it is—accompanied by much eating of cake and drinking of whisky, and it will last well into the morning hours. Lucky, for this performance, are accounted those dark of skin. If the first-footer be fair the tradition runs that it bodes ill-fortune for the year to the house whose threshold he or she has crossed; and often enough a door is shut in the face of such a

friend, simply because of his complexion. Moreover, the visitor must not come empty-handed; and so the bottle and broken wine-glass which each carries serve as a double introduction.

And now all who sat up till the city bells struck twelve, as well in the crowded tenements here as in the far-off suburbs of the rich, have wished each other a good New Year, and are retiring to rest. Among them, doubtless, there are many thoughts of sadness. Many a widow was a wife last year; many a ruined home was prosperous; many a soiled heart still was pure. But the old year, with its sorrow, has passed away in the night, and with the New Year's dawn a glimmer of hope comes in at the darkest casement.

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